Selected problems of current ethical education in Slovakia

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1. Ethical Education in Slovakia

1.1. Short history and key figures of Ethical Education in Slovakia

Slovakia is a relatively small country in Central Europe. During the development of its statehood, it has experienced several totalitarian regimes. During World War II there was the fascist Slovak state and in the period after World War II until 1989 the country was governed by the communist ideology. These facts have had an impact on education, while the trend towards democratic, more liberal and ideologically untouched education occurred gradually after the fall of socialism in 1989. In 1993 Slovakia separated from the Czech Republic, and this event created conditions for an independent concept of education. Ethical Education as a compulsory elective subject (in alternation with religious education) is taught in primary and secondary education right from the period of 90s. During Sep-
September 1990 Ethical Education was experimentally implemented into education at 20 Slovak schools (Lencz, 1992).

Interestingly enough, the Slovak version of Ethical Education is based primarily on the concept of education for prosociality by the Spanish psychologist Roberto Roche Olivar. This author is Emeritus Professor and Lecturer at Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona since 1972 (http://inclusive-education.net/robert-roche). His concept was influenced by authors of the Character development project – E. A. Wynne, K. Ryan, T. Lickona, and Child development program – D. Solomon, D. Watson, V. Battistich. Olivar has developed his concept based on the ideas of CDP since 1980’s (Lencz, 1992).

Roberto Roche Olivar has been working at the Independent University in Barcelona in Spain, where he as a doctor of psychology has been oriented on the field of experimental psychology and pedagogy. Olivar has chosen, on the basis of existing empirical studies, about 30 factors that are related to prosocial behavior and he had verified the data by his own research. This research included around 300 pupils from 24 classes in the age between 13 and 16. He concluded that there were 137 pupils who were more prosocial and 145 pupils who were less prosocial. Roche Olivar developed his own questionnaire of school prosocial behavior and he also used another one focused on empathy from Mehrabian and Epstein. Despite this, Roche Olivar created a questionnaire for parents too. The analysis of the data established on given research led him to the creation of a theoretical model consisting of 15 items, from which 10 are related to promoting prosociality of students and 5 are related to the work of educators and parents (Lencz, 1992).
The ten of them are:

1. Dignity of human being, self-respect,
2. Attitudes and competences in interpersonal relations,
3. Positive assessment of behavior of others,
4. Creativity and initiative,
5. Communication, expression of one own’s feelings,
6. Interpersonal and social empathy,
7. Assertiveness,
8. Real and displayed prosocial models,
9. Prosocial behavior,
10. Social and complex prosociality.

The five elements important for educators and parents are (Lencz, 1992):

1. Taking children as they are,
2. Attribution of prosociality,
3. Inductive discipline,
4. Encouraging to prosociality,
5. Support of prosociality.

The concept was brought to Slovak conditions thanks to Ladislav Lencz and Olga Krížová. Roberto Roche Olivar described his theory among other texts also in the book *Psicología y Educación de la Prosocialidad* originally published in 1990, published in Slovakia in 1992 under the title *Etická výchova* – that is *Ethical education*. Many authors claim that the translation of the title was not adequate, because it has different meanings – prosocial education is not interchangeable with ethical education, prosocial behaviour can be unethical and vice versa (see e.g. Zelina, 1992, Grác, 2004). Despite this, the book has been recommended by the Slovak Ministry of Education as the
textbook for Ethical Education for primary and secondary education.

The book consists of ten chapters dedicated to the ten items mentioned above: they are first shortly described and analyzed, then accompanied by the proposed activities. The remaining two chapters are focused on the behaviour of educators and education in family. As written by L. Lencz, the educational program based on these elements has been implemented in schools in Catalonia from nursery to high school. (Lencz, 1992)

In 1993, Ladislav Lencz published related books focused on Ethical Education entitled Pedagogika etickej výchovy. Výchova k prosociálnosti (Pedagogics of Ethical Education. Education to Prosociality) and Metódy etickej výchovy (Methods of Ethical Education). These books are primarily oriented on pedagogy. Lencz inclined towards a modified version of humanistic pedagogy with elements of personalism strongly influenced by the ideas of Roche Olivar.

However, how did it come up that Slovakia adopted Olivar’s concept of prosociality? Some authors (e.g. Gluchman, 2009) have pointed out that the team that established Ethical Education in Slovakia was led by Ladislav Lencz, who was an openly Christian thinker and cooperated with several experts from abroad, including Brian Wakeman. Wakeman’s action towards the implementation of Ethical Education in Slovakia was supported by a British organisation, Christian Action Research and Education, whose goal was to implement Christian values into eastern European countries (Wakeman, 1994). Many authors (e.g. Beňo, 2004, Škoda, 2004, Gluchman, 2009) claim that Olivar’s concept finds its proponents especially within Christian thinkers. Nevertheless, although the concept
of Roberto Roche Olivar is compatible with Christian Ethical Education, it can be compatible also with some other worldviews; it does not seem to be exclusively Christian. I assume that choosing his concept could be motivated by the fact that it was compatible with the so-called humanistic pedagogy, towards which Ladislav Lencz inclined. From Olivar’s text it is obvious that he was inclined towards some form of humanistic pedagogy (and humanistic psychology) as well. Despite his ideas related to positive approach to students, favouring the free development of child’s personality, he cites also ideas of authors of humanistic psychology such as C. Rogers, E. Fromm etc.

1.2. The current curriculum of Ethical Education in Slovakia

The current concept of Ethical Education in Slovakia is still significantly influenced by the theories of prosociality by Roberto Roche Olivar and Ladislav Lencz. The subject Ethical Education in the Slovak curriculum falls within the educational area ‘Human and Values’. According to the Current Innovated State Educational Program for lower secondary education (2015), the main task of this educational field is to participate actively in forming the student’s personality with their own identity and value orientation. Furthermore, it says that respect for human and nature, cooperation, prosociality and universal human values have an important place in this area. The State Educational Program claims that, pursuing this aim, this educational area should not focus only on providing information on moral principles, but should particularly encourage understanding and internalisation of moral standards.
and the adoption of a behavior consistent with them. According to the original and newly upgraded State Educational Program, the role of Ethical Education is to educate and develop personality with his/her own identity and value orientation. Ethical education is thus aimed at education of the so-called prosociality (SEP 2015, SEP 2008).

It can be said that the content of the innovated national curriculum, for instance in lower secondary education of Ethical Education, compared to the previous version did not change significantly. Both cover basic topics such as: open communication, understanding and positive evaluation of oneself and others, creativity in interpersonal relationships (in the previous version it was complemented by initiative), ethical aspects of nature conservation, identification and expression of feelings (in the earlier version there were also one’s own feelings), cognitive and emotional empathy (in the previous version there was the theme of understanding others and “to put oneself into their shoes”), assertive behavior (before mastering assertiveness), positive role models in history and literature, positive role models in everyday life, prosocial behavior, discovering one’s own uniqueness and identity, to be yourself, to be able to defend your own rights and opinions, prosociality as a component of one’s own identity, ethical aspects of the relationship within one’s own family, the ethical aspects of integration of sexual maturity in the context of personality, relationship to the sick, elderly and socially disadvantaged (in the previous version also relationship to the mentally and morally disturbed people), sources of ethical knowledge of humanity, life, physical and mental health as an ethical value, economic values and ethics, reputation and truth as ethical value, deepening communication skills, healthy lifestyle, addiction,
mass media influences (SEP 2015, SEP 2008). As we may observe, various aspects of prosocial and assertive behaviour as well as the ability of proper evaluation and making right decisions are central in current Ethical Education in Slovakia.

1.3. Similarities of the Slovak concept of Ethical Education with other countries

As written above, the Ethical Education in Slovakia is based on the concept of prosociality by Robert Roche Olivar. His concept of prosociality has found its proponents in many countries of the world. Olivar cooperated not only with the Ministry of Education in Slovakia but also with the Ministry in Argentina\(^1\). His approach to prosocial education found its application in some regions of Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Croatia, Macedonia, Ukraine, Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil and Bolivia\(^2\).

The concept of Ethical Education that is most similar to the one in Slovakia can be found in Czech Re-

\(^{1}\) For instance in Argentina the education for prosociality gained its popularity especially at the end of 90’s after series of lectures of Roberto Roche Olivar in this country (See Center for Social Development Global Service Institute 2005 available at the web site http://www.clayss.org/06_investigacion/descargas/CLAYSS_Investigacion.pdf).

public. The formation of the subject is strongly inspired by the Slovak model, because it started to develop later. In 2009, the Ministry of Education made one of the key interventions supporting teaching of Ethical Education. Since then, there have been several projects for implementation of the Ethical Education in Czech schools, supported also by the American Chamber of Commerce in the Czech Republic. As stated on the web site of Czech Ministry of Education, the aim of Ethical Education in Czech Republic is not philosophical; it is rather understood as a pedagogical and psychological tool for the development of pupils’ prosocial behaviour. The model of teaching prosocial behaviour is based on the ideas by Olivar and Lencz (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Czech Republic, 2010).

Similarly, the elements of prosocial education can be found in the curricula of subjects similar to Ethical Education of several European countries. For instance, the idea of cooperation is in the curriculum of Scotland, Greece, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Poland. The idea of promoting respect or tolerance can be found also in the curriculum of Denmark, Switzerland, Cyprus, Hungary, and Slovenia. The concept of responsibility emerges also in the curriculum of Denmark, Finland, Sweden, France, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, and Poland. Philanthropy, friendship, creation of good relationships are included in curricula in Germany, Hungary. Help to socially weaker people or mutual help can be found in Cyprus and in Poland. The idea of promoting justice can be observed in curricula in Germany, Netherlands, and Greece. (Korim et al, 2010).

In some sense, similar to the prosocial principles of Slovak Ethical Education is also the concept of Ethical Education in some Scandinavian countries – in
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Norway, where the priority is given to respect of pupils personality, and values as solidarity, responsibility and tolerance are honoured; and in Sweden, where one of the central ideas is respect towards others. On the other hand, the curriculum of Ethical Education that is taught in Finland as Philosophy of life and ethics has a lot stronger philosophical basis. Similarly it can be said that in many countries, like in Germany, the course Ethics is understood more like practical philosophy. In Belgium there are also similar elements to prosocial Ethical Education. The nonconfessional course Ethics aims at developing an autonomous personality and it also aims at educating pupils to the principles of humane society (Korim et al, 2008).

2. Some problems and Achilles’ heels of Slovak Ethical Education

Despite the fact that Slovak model of Ethical Education based on the concept of prosociality has several advantages, as for instance developing better relations between pupils and teachers\(^3\), there are also several sets of problems. I will classify them into these four areas:

(1) the problem related to the status of the subject
(2) the problem of relationship to akin subjects and cross-curricular themes
(3) the problem of qualification of teachers
(4) the problem related to the content of the subject.

One of the problems is related to the status of the subject. The subject is often underestimated. Many parents, students as well as school directors and teach-

\(^3\) For advantages see eg. Lencz (1992, 1993).
ers think it is a very simple subject, where children learn nothing new, they just play, freely discuss, and the whole subject is basically useless. This is partly related to the fact that this subject is not graded⁴.

Another part of the problem of the status of the subject is his being compulsory elective at the moment. This means that students (their parents) can choose whether they will attend Ethical Education or Religious Education. However, it is disputable whether this is the right approach to separate students according to their religious preferences. Some suggest that Ethical Education should be compulsory for all students and should include multidenominational issues.

The first problem area is related to the second one – relationship to similar subjects. Some people misinterpret Ethical Education as atheist education, that opposes any form of Religious Education⁵. This leads to the situation that parents in some regions only enrol children for Religious Education, and Ethical Education is not taught in many schools at all, due to lack of interest. Therefore, many experts suggest that Ethical Education should not be understood as (mutually exclusive) alternative to Religious Education, but it should teach students about various religions and their values and promote tolerance. This approach can be found for instance in the subject Religious Education in Sweden, which is not solely focused on a particular religious view; on the contrary, it includes information about

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⁴ The issue of whether and how to measure the pupils’ competences in ethics is rather complicated. For instance, as pointed out by Osbeck et al. (2015) in Sweden there are problems particularly with the assessment of ethical competences of students.

⁵ Similarly, in Belgium, the course Ethics is nonconfessional and an alternative to Religious education (see eg. Korim, 2008).
various different religions and their ethical standards (see e.g. Osbeck, 2015; Korim, 2008).

Another problem is that the content of Ethical Education sometimes overlaps with other subjects and cross-curricular themes. An example is Civics as compulsory subject, which covers similar topics as for instance cooperation, self-evaluation, equality, prejudices, communication and so on. There are also analogies with the cross-cutting theme ‘Personal and social development’, which also concentrates on values, development of moral individual and so on. On the other hand, these areas seems to be central for human moral development and sometimes it might help that these topics emerge in various contexts so the students become more aware about them.

As I already mentioned, the subject Ethical Education is underestimated not only by lay persons but also by educators. Some teachers and principals therefore think that this subject can be taught by anybody. Despite the fact that there is the possibility to study Ethical Education at quite many universities, still many teachers who already have been teaching it are not qualified enough.

The last problem area I will remark is the content of the subject. In the following text I will focus on the problem of prosociality, values and otherness.

2.1. Prosociality as a problem

As I have already mentioned, the Slovak version of Ethical Education is based primarily on the concept of education for prosociality by the Spanish psychologist Roberto Roche Olivar. The principal issue is then the question: how is prosociality, as one of the key concepts, to be interpreted? Lencz identifies prosociali-
ty with altruism (respectively, sometimes he writes about altruism, sometimes in the same context about prosociality; however he does not clarify their relationship, we can only assume the interconnection) (eg. Lencz, 1993a, pp. 18-19). Prosociality is therefore often identified with altruism, understood as selfless action, but apparently this is not entirely appropriate. Olivar states that prosocial behavior can be understood as behavior that has to be for the benefit of another person, group of people or social objectives without expected reward for it in advance (Olivar, 1992, p. 149). On the one hand, it is for example selfless assistance, on the other hand, he admits that such a procedure brings positive feelings for the agent that is not a complete selflessness. L. Lencz also claims that the result of prosocial action is happiness, joy of acting, and these again are not among the so-called unselfish actions (Lencz, 1993a, p. 10).

Similarly, he is aware of the problem of inclusion of cooperation and reciprocity in prosociality, which is understood altruistically. However, what is altruism? Answers vary. It is often regarded as selfless conduct, conduct that does not benefit the agent, sacrifice for the benefit of another. It may be, however, understood as the action that brings the best overall results for others; the consequences for the moral agent count only so far as they affect the others. Such an interpretation would not exclude the positive consequences for the moral agent. The question is whether and what form of altruism is appropriate? Shall we teach all pupils through moral training of altruism, respectively prosociality as mentioned above, or is there room for the development of critical thinking? For example, if aiding others is ideal because it is a manifestation of prosociality, how can we evaluate when children write test and
advise each other? Is it correct? Korim (2008, p. 9) also pointed out that we can criticize the Slovak Ethical Education as focusing merely on education of prosociality.

Olivar also introduces the concept of comprehensive prosociality, the so-called complex prosociality, in which he highlights the problem of the consequences of conduct and disputes individualism and holism in trying to apply prosocial behavior in practice. Therefore, he points out that from the short-sighted perspective an act can be right, but in terms of a wider context (a group, etc.) it is wrong. It is gratifying that he recognizes the difficulties in applying prosociality but unfortunately he does not offer any clarification, solutions, or a deeper philosophical and ethical analysis (see Olivar, 1992, pp. 177-179). In this respect, his approach resembles the kind of consequentialist ethics, which also assesses the accuracy of procedures based on the consequences. On the other hand, he emphasizes the intention, which fits more with the ethics of virtue and deontological ethics (Baďurová, 2015).

Similarly L. Lencz has difficulties in defining prosociality, since he describes it as an expression of the Golden Rule – ‘Do to others what you would want them to do to you’ (similarly also in the negative form – ‘Do not to others what you would not want them to do to you’). (Lencz, 1993a, p. 9; 1993b, p. 5) The Golden Rule, however, is problematic for several reasons and deserves deeper philosophical and ethical analysis. The Golden Rule, in spite of its general popularity, has been also confronted with criticism stemming for example from the diversity of needs, interests, and wishes of actors. As a counterexample to the Golden Rule, we can cite a situation where someone donates you a birthday gift in the spirit of this rule, which you, however, do not like (eg. A fisherman do-
nates to someone who is not interested in fishing a fish-hook, etc.). Similarly, a certain interpretation and application of the Golden Rule justifies procedures adopted by a person who would like to fight and intentionally provoke others to fight. Thus, the Golden Rule in its classic form has a number of shortcomings that were criticized by philosophers such as G. H von Wright, K. Popper, I. Kant. The problem is that people are not the same (for example, they come from different cultures) and therefore our wishes (or needs) may not be identical. As a consequence, it would perhaps be more appropriate to interpret it as follows: do to others what is reasonable and what they want to be done. The Golden Rule is also problematic in terms of cultural relativism. The question is also whether the Golden Rule is primarily about my interests or the interests of others. The problem is whether the reciprocity in the rule must be real, potential or merely symbolic. Golden Rule may be, due to its popularity, a suitable rule for behavior, however we should not ignore its weaknesses and limits (Baďurová, 2015).

Another problem is that Lencz apparently implicitly assumes that prosocial actions are inherited, since he claims that children during the Ethical Education are able to raise themselves and the role of teacher is only the one of a moderator (See Lencz, 1993a, p. 10). On the other hand, he writes that human behavior is the result of learning, albeit he considers as given from birth the general principles as how to do goodness and avoid evil. One can, according to him alone and (what is interesting) also with the help of the society (i.e. teacher) determine the rules, which are required in order that he/she could survive (Lencz, 1993a, p. 26). Similarly Olivar tends to consider altruism, and proso-
ciality as well, as a natural human tendency (Olivar, 1992, p. 152). These ideas are also somewhat puzzling: as we are deemed naturally good, it raises the question, what is Ethical Education good for? Since Lencz was a theologian, it can be assumed that the naturalness of the moral conduct could be seen in terms of ethical concepts of the medieval natural law ethicist T. Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas identifies the rational nature of human beings as that which defines moral law; therefore, he labels his concept “ethics of natural law”. He writes that the rule and measure of human acts is reason, which is the first principle of human acts. According to his view, since humans are by nature rational beings, therefore it is morally appropriate that they should behave in a way that conforms to their rational nature (Himma, 2015).

For this reason, Ethical Education should reinforce the rationality that is primarily cognitive, and not just the affective side of students. However, Lencz rather tends to favor development of emotions and affective side of personality. An open question remains whether such an approach, thus only from the position of Christian ethics, is appropriate for Ethical Education, as the society is (and probably will become even more) heterogeneous, composed of members of different religious and non-religious groups. The problem of the authority of Christian Church in education (in Ireland) was interestingly described and analyzed by Jones Irwin in his article *Interculturalism, Ethos and Ideology – Barriers to Freedom and Democracy in Irish Primary Education* (2009).

However, let us return to the Slovak context. On the other hand, Lencz argues that the internalized values motivate our actions, but the question is: why they should be internalized, as before they are provided they
are already our own? In addition, the teacher should, according to him, point out the negative phenomena by the method of highlighting peacefully the consequences of action (Lencz, 1993a, p. 28). However, consequences are not always a reliable indicator of morality. Some thought experiments (e.g. By P. Foot, and J. J. Thomson) pointed out the counterintuitiveness of utilitarianism as a form of consequentialism that focuses just on results. Nevertheless, sometimes the consequences can help, but it depends on how we will point to them. The teacher has also other possibilities to point out on wrong action; he/she could use also the method of universalization as suggested by many notable ethicists, for instance Immanuel Kant or R. M. Hare (Baďurová, 2015).

2.1.1. The prosociality in current debate

Roberto Roche Olivar remains one of the key figures in the discussion on concepts of prosociality. His ideas have been published worldwide in various languages. As he writes with his colleagues (Escotorin, Cirera, Roche, 2010) the main idea of the concept of prosociality is its being the antonym of antisocial. The idea of prosociality is linked with the factors and benefits that help, solidarity, giving, sharing and cooperation have for all the persons, groups or societies involved in the action, either as agents or receivers of the prosociality. Roche uses the term prosociality to re-

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fer not only to actions, but also for a certain model of thinking. The history of the study of prosociality may be dated back to the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century. McDougal in 1908 expressed the idea that the prosocial behaviours result from “tender emotions” created by the parental instinct. However, as Escotorin, Cirera, Roche (2010) have pointed out, the attention on the study of prosocial behaviours is more recent, and arose from the case of Katherine “Kitty” Genovese in 1964. It was a case in which a young woman was brutally murdered among the indifference of her neighbours. Aforementioned authors have been studying the prosocial behaviour under the group LIPA since 1984, whose one of the founders was Roche Olivar. The organization had been created by experts and professors from Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. The abbreviation LIPA – Laboratory of Applied Prosocial Research is from the Spanish – Laboratorio de Investigación Prosocial Aplicada and it represents is a multi-disciplinary and international team. It has designed intervention models to improve the prosocial quality of the communication in organizational training contexts. Now LIPA works with a network of experts in Prosociality from inside and outside the UAB’s Faculty of Psychology. They also work on projects of prosocial optimization and training programs in Spain, but also other countries in Europe and Latin America\textsuperscript{7}.

However, the discussion on prosociality is still ongoing not only in this institution. Contribution to the discussion has been made by numerous articles and books, like, for instance, the \textit{Handbook of prosocial education} in 2012 (although the content is mostly fo-

\textsuperscript{7} See e.g. The official web page: http://inclusive-education.net/-partners/autonomous-university-of-barcelona
cused on American context, it is a valuable contribution since it offers also practical case studies). In psychology and pedagogy many interesting studies of prosocial behaviour emerged, focused for instance on gender differences of prosocial behaviour among young people, which can have an impact on education or problem of positive parenting and its role on prosocial behavior (see e.g, De Caroli, Falanga, Sagone, 2014, Pastorelli et al, 2016.)

2.2. The problem of values

Similarly, as indicated by the issue of prosociality, the whole Ethical Education implicitly faces the problem of ontological status of values, as well as the epistemology of values that deserves serious philosophical (metaethical or philosophical-axiological) examination. On the one hand, it indicates the development of individuality, uniqueness, expression of one’s own opinions (e.g, topic to be yourself, to be able to defend own rights and views), presentation of alternative ethical and ethical-religious views, etc.; on the other hand, within the educational area ‘Human and values’ (which includes ethical and Religious Education), the internalisation of ‘universal human moral values’ is required.

In this regard, there inevitably emerge philosophical questions on the nature of values. Are values subjective or objective? Is relativism or universalism val-

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8 Prosocial behaviour and education has been studied for instance also at the Sapienza University of Rome. We can mention Bernadette Paula Luengo Kanacri and her dissertation in 2011 under supervision of Roche Olivar and Caprara, Pastorelli from Sapienza University of Rome.
id, realism or antirealism? What justification can be given for the validity of selected ethical values? How to interpret values within the current clash of cultures and religions? What is meant by universal human values? These problems should be probably reflected by one of the themes of Ethical Education - Sources of ethical knowledge of mankind, but it is not clear how it can handle the conflict between pluralism and diversity of values and ethical approach to education and universal values.

Lencz also admits that the issue of standards and values as basic categories of Ethical Education should be developed in terms of philosophy and philosophical ethics (also philosophical anthropology) (Lencz, 1993b, pp. 8-9), but the area itself, which could be a real contribution in laying the foundations of well-researched Ethical Education, bypasses it and does not pay any deeper attention to it. Rather it inclines to pedagogical and psychological approaches, which are insufficient for addressing the issue. On the other hand, we may assume that since Lencz inclined towards humanistic psychology and pedagogy his views on the nature of values may be related to this concept of nature of values. The humanistic psychology is also related the idea of freedom and self-help of the client and it may be related also to existential approaches where the values are partly created by the person. As written by Shaffer (1978), one of the key elements of humanistic psychology is that each person has the ability to determine for them what is good and bad.

Lencz claims that the purpose of Ethical Education is the personality that has its own identity, is herself/himself, while this personality includes prosociality and is able to act in accordance with the standards derived from the universal solidarity and justice (Lencz,
Thus, at first sight there is a somewhat contradictory ideal to which Ethical Education heads. On this basis, on one hand there is the individuality of the pupil and its development, and on the other hand, it is assumed that the individuality will have universal attitudes and will hold universal values. This is a bit puzzling.

At the same time L. Lencz with O. Krížová writes that the aim of Ethical Education is not only to inform students about ethical principles, but to help them to create their own opinion on the issue and adopt adequate attitude and behaviour (Lencz, Krížová, 2004, p. 5). This argument is also interesting. The question arises, how is possible to have one’s own opinion on the subject and at the same time acquire appropriate attitudes and behaviours? Apparently again there is a problem of relativism and universalism. To explain this, let us say the students are dealing with the question of abortion, some express the view that they agree, others oppose. Which group takes the appropriate attitude? Which group stands the universal value? Or is the appropriate attitude that they are able to speak and listen to the opinions of others?

The claim of L. Lencz that a personality developed through Ethical Education should be able of healthy criticality (Lencz, 1993b, p. 5) – that is obviously critical thinking, is linked to this issue. Lencz in his texts used adjective ‘healthy’ as the term for what is good, correct, but he does not specify it further. As the ideal of Ethical Education (as well as education in general) he understands the healthy development of personality (see Lencz, 1993, p. 10). We can assume, then, that developed personality is capable of critical thinking. However, in general, the question of the understanding of truth and critical thinking in Ethical Education is problematic, and I think that it is not ques-
tioned enough and does not reflect the philosophical point of view. As I already mentioned in my previous text, here I see room for further refinement of the concept of Ethical Education in Slovakia (Baďurová, 2015).

From this issue follows the question: which should be the role of Ethical Education? Reviewing the idea of Lencz and Križová, it appears that the goal of Ethical Education is not only to inform students about ethical principles, but to help them to create their own opinion on the subject and adopt a reasonable attitude and behavior (Lencz, Krížová, 2004, p. 5). That argument raises the question whether to understand Ethical Education as philosophical ethics or rather as moral training that teaches students certain ethical principles.

For example, the Finnish author Helena Siipi (2006), in her article *Cultural Dependency In The Teaching Of Ethics: The Case of Finland*, points out the difficulty of teaching ethics in schools. Likewise, she wonders whether teaching ethics should be understood as moral training rather than teaching philosophical ethics. In the case of Ethical Education as moral training it means a systematic goal-oriented training towards given values. By contrast, in the case of Ethical Education as a philosophical ethics it would be rather focused on critical thinking.

In Slovakia, many theorists are inclined to distinguish between ethics and morality – where ethics is the philosophy of morality, the science of morals, and morality on the other hand is a social phenomenon that is investigated by ethics. In this respect if we apply this to Ethical Education it should be the subject, the content of which is moral philosophy. Such an approach seems to me well suited, of course if adjusted to the age of pupils. I believe that Ethical Education should
contribute to critical thinking of students that can be developed to some extent also in lower secondary education. I think that it is not enough to understand Ethical Education just as moral training, since, especially at the age when students attend lower secondary education, they have a need to look for alternative answers and they do not accept ready-made solutions uncritically presented by the teacher. Also for their participation in society it is more relevant and more useful to have the ability to think critically (i.e. rationally consider, analyse and assess the pros and cons in order to arrive at optimal decisions) and not only to apply the learned moral precepts which, in unfamiliar situations, moral dilemmas and conflicts will not help (Baďurová, 2015).

2.3. The otherness

Another problem is the acceptance of otherness. We highlighted this in the paper – *Anti-bias education and human rights teaching in secondary education of students* (Poláková, Baďurová, 2015). In the paper, we pointed out to the growing manifestations of homophobia among young people and the rejection of otherness as a good reason for the development of anti-bias education in Slovakia. We think that if we want to change the stereotypical views of the rejection of otherness, we should be oriented mainly to the education of young generations. This was underlined also by the Slovak National Plan for Human Rights Education for the period 2005-2014, which states: «The aim of human rights education in schools is acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that are essential for enhancing human dignity, informed and independent participation in
the development of a democratic society, in accordance with values such as human rights, equality, plurality and justice».

However, this assumption does not match the contents of Ethical Education, namely the theme: *The Ethical Aspects of Integrated Sexual Maturation in the Context of Personality*, which deals only with heterosexual relationships. I think indeed that the presumption of acceptance of otherness should also include other forms of relationships – also non-heterosexual. Nevertheless, it does not deal with this issue, despite the fact that the SEP (2008, 2015) also suggests that the purpose of Ethical Education is to help student realize his/her sexual identity.

Lack of reflection and only formally stated dealing with otherness is also reflected in the gender-insensitive language – using only the masculine (pupil, teacher) in SEP. This approach to writing and its relationship with the acceptance of otherness, however, is indisputable. The need for reflecting the otherness also through gender-sensitive language was highlighted by numerous feminist-oriented authors. I think that today it is undoubtedly a still actual issue.

I believe that another problem is the lack of reflection also on other forms of otherness. Namely, the lack of innovated State Educational Program of Ethical Education in relation to others is manifested also in deleting questions related to morally disturbed people in the topic dedicated to the sick, elderly, or disabled. I believe that this is an interesting and important question. Thus, it is necessary to reflect the problem of how to deal with people who are not capable of making moral choices, and so on (Badurová, 2015). I think that the reflection of otherness is necessary for building a developed, tolerant, anti-totalitarian society.
3. Conclusion

I tried to highlight selected issues related to the current Ethical Education in Slovakia. I perceive the problems mainly in the following areas: (1) the status of the subject, (2) the relationship to akin subjects and cross-curricular themes, (3) the qualification of teachers, and (4) the content of the subject. One of the most important is the content of subject, especially the problem of values, prosociality and otherness. I focused mainly on criticism and weaknesses of Ethical Education. In my view, because I am primarily interested in philosophy, despite the innovation of State Educational Program, particularly in those areas that deal with the values, there still remained many philosophically inadequately treated areas. I believe that to build Ethical Education merely on the pedagogical, psychological, and a very limited ethical basis is insufficient if they are not properly anchored in philosophy. I am more inclined towards the approaches to Ethical Education that can be found in Finland or Germany, approaches that have a stronger philosophical basis of the subject. Despite this, I think that most of the aforementioned problems stem from the fact that the subject is underestimated, and the teachers are overloaded, underpaid\(^9\) and lack suitable teaching material. Therefore, we (at the Department of Ethics and Civic Education) have been working on the project *KEGA 008UMB-4/2015 Human rights and anti-bias education* that will provide didactic material focused on implementation of human rights and tolerance into education. In this project, we

\(^9\) This situation resulted in ongoing strikes in Slovakia. See eg. Iniciativa slovenských učiteľov 2016 and their web: http://isu.sk/tlacove-spravy/the-teachers-strike-goes-on-in-slovakia/
created handbooks for teachers and students and have been working on multimedia materials based on the research of their needs (see Poláková- Baďurová, 2015). In the project APVV 14-0176 Didactic means facilitating the implementation of selected cross-curricula themes into education of ethical education we have been working on theoretical basis for implementation of the selected social and environmental issues into the ethical education. While doing this we try to develop not just teaching materials but also solid philosophical basis for dealing with these topics. For instance in implementation of the topic of environmental education, where we rely on relevant texts from contemporary environmental philosophy (see eg. Baďurová, 2015).

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