



## The Dialogic Turning Point for Educational Team Leaders: School Managers and Teachers. A Reflection on the Ongoing Transformation Processes

**Marco Braghero\***

*Professor, Advanced Training in Dialogical Practices, University of Pisa, Europe*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Marco Braghero, Professor, Advanced Training in Dialogical Practices, University of Pisa, Europe.

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### Abstract

What are the possibilities for playing the role of School Headmaster and Teacher in the school of the 21st century? What new responsibilities? What new skills? What kind of leadership? The article explores, from a dialogical point of view, the possibility that School Heads and Teachers can consciously become true 'Educational Team Leaders' through the practice of dialogicality, adopting a 'coach' attitude and practicing transformational leadership.

**Keywords:** Dialogicity; Dialogic Authority; Leadership; Transformation; Mindfulness; Coaching, Management; Democracy; Governance; Uncertainty

### Introduction

The article investigates how the dialogical approach integrated with coaching and mindfulness (Dialogical Practices Coaching and Mindfulness henceforth DPC and M) can contribute to the ongoing process of "transformation" of the roles of School Headmaster and Teacher taking into consideration leadership. Investigate also how the ongoing transformation fosters and requires a coaching attitude, assuming responsibilities and competences of a true "educational team leader" at the service of the entire educating community, and how this approach can represent a democratic social innovation.

Dialogical practices are an approach, an attitude, a way of seeing, which is based on recognizing and respecting the otherness of the other and going out to meet it (T. Arnkil, J. Seikkula, 2013) [1]. Dialogicality is the socio-psychological human capacity to be involved in thinking and communicating together (I. Markova, 2003) [2]. All relational working models are naturally based on dialogue, in our case though the word "dialogical" goes far beyond its usual meaning: we are not talking simply about the act of dialogue between practitioner and user or between people who perform different functions, we are talking also about the way each person is itself developing and transforming through a constant dialogue with reality, with others and within itself.

Open dialogue as a way of interacting has been further explored by numerous scholars, who see the interdependence of minds as rooted in human nature and capable of permeating and re-generating our mental faculties: awareness, thought, language, knowledge, decision-making. Learning the dialogic mode in professional life is pragmatic interpersonal work, dialogue is generated in the way we interact with each other.

It is often surprising how people witness initial change by noticing first a different way of being with themselves and in a short time that becomes a way of being with others. By 'dialogical' conversation, we specifically mean that the conversation bears the potential for a person to feel heard, and this is the beginning of any change. Assessing the dialogical quality of a conversation means, first and foremost, assessing the facilitators' responsiveness.

In this sense, in the educational and psychosocial field, these concepts are connected to concepts of democracy and democraticity. With the concept of democracy, we mean a way of implementing decision-making processes based on the sharing of power, the exercise of rights, social justice and its rules, freedom of expression and communication, participation, the creative and non-violent transformation of conflict aimed at finding solutions, the sharing of decisions on the educating community, the practice of comparing

ideas with the other. A value of social relations that is constantly changing and never exhaustively defined. An indispensable element of every educational institution, social environment, local community, governance. Dialogue is something inherent to life, it constitutes the connective tissue of every democratic process. Dialogue is foundational and interconnected to every relationship and we cannot do without it [3]. The intersubjective quality of our consciousness is evident from our earliest interactions, as shown by studies on pre- and neonatal communication (Bråten and Trevarthen, 2007) [4]. Learning to breathe and to be in dialogue are the two preconditions for our survival and thus represent a common basis of experience for all of us. However, there are situations of deep suffering where this dialogue is disturbed and needs to be restored. With care, respect and willingness. By organising the resources of the educational institutions, the social network and the educating community, around students and their families, teachers and non-teaching staff, managers and local governance; the sooner this can be done for as long as it takes, the sooner dialogue will be generated and trust will activate resources in the community that will be decisive in developing learning-teaching processes, global citizenship skills and finally in overcoming difficulties and crises and unravelling conflicts.

Our engagement in educational institutions and other complex public and private organizations over the past ten years has transformed us both personally and professionally.

Becoming dialogical is not a 'technical' fact, a way of doing education, but rather it has to do with a way of living and being in the world (Seikkula, 2011) [5]. Dialogical practices pose a number of challenges for the organization and evaluation of educational services.

Dialogical practices are an approach that adapts to the specific need of the organization and, even more, to the specific need of the person in whatever role and position he or she is in. It emphasizes the fact that each person is unique and the caring is adapted to uniqueness. Moreover, the approach needs the quality of timeliness and the fact that the operators, the professionals ought to be able to integrate different methodologies within the space-time in the classroom, in the meetings, in the different collegial meetings, considering the whole as a continuous educational process, to be monitored systematically.

While practicing dialogicality in Finland we were struck the most by the fact that Finnish teachers considered not possible to talk about the student and the family in their absence. Here become obvious to us the difference with our non-transparent, faux-confidential, scarcely participated and shared practices: in class councils, in assessment, disciplinary and, above all, relational processes.

Whatever the Finnish manager and teachers had to say, they would do it openly in the presence of interested and involved students and family members. This mode fits in with the idea of open dialogue as defined by Jaakko Seikkula in the clinical and psychotherapeutic field. The observance of this simple and revolutionary rule, although initially not easy to apply and with possible contradictory outcomes, where it has been tried out it has aroused enthusiasm, empowered relational processes, improved the climate and reduced litigation.

The open, polyphonic meetings with colleagues, students and families is the experience of a strong, confident and non-judgmental involvement. In fact, the presence of the different voices during the encounters is 'symmetrical' and, just as Bakhtin noted with regard to Dostoevsky, in polyphony the author's voice was constantly changing and all voices had equal weight [6]. Just as Dostoevsky can only relate to the voices of the different characters, modifying the plot of the novel according to their contribution, so the leader and teachers have the responsibility to bring out resources and solutions from the participants in the meeting, renouncing to steer them with a predefined plan.

Integrated dialogic practices, as proposed by DPC and M and by the "Mediterranean way" of dialogic practices (proposed by the multi-professional group "DialogicaMente"), complement the practice of the reflexive group as proposed by the Norwegian Tom Andersen [7]. Andersen points out that during meetings practitioners could talk to each other in the presence of the student and the family, who are listening and always have the opportunity to respond to what is said, can express how they felt and what resonated in them as they heard about themselves from the teachers and the manager. The effectiveness of reflective dialogues practice can unfold also while doing this work with colleagues, where the reflective group has the freedom to dialogue in the presence of another group of teachers who can in turn reflect on what they have heard [8]. The integrated dialogue approach also includes Tom and Robert Arnkil's anticipatory dialogues, otherwise defined as dialogues from the future, as a powerful tool for shared and participatory planning and in addition to reflective dialogues [9]. "Remembering the future" is proved also to be a powerful accelerator of orientation processes in support of students and families. The idea is to generate dialogical spaces where students can recognize, share and anticipate their concerns [10].

The practice and use of 'TimeOut', a new, light, fast and effective way of practicing dialogicity in organizational contexts, further expands our dialogic approach. Timeout was created in 2017 together with various Finnish organizations and experts, including Prof. Kai Alhanen, trying out different approaches and modalities [11-13].

### What is Timeout?

- Timeout is a new way to generate and have constructive discussions, conversations about the need for dialogue and peer support that take the form of learning experiences of the otherness of others.
- Timeout is useful each time we are in need to deepen the understanding of a topic, of a peer-to-peer meeting, of decision-making or to bring different people together.
- Timeout provides an opportunity to pause and consider things in peace and allows you to invite in those who do not usually take part in conversations. Timeout is an exercise on how to facilitate a dialogue in small steps and as experience grows, thus enabling one to become an expert in dialogue!
- Timeout generates feelings of inclusion among participants and social inclusion in general.
- Timeout provides a deeper understanding of the subject matter and different perspectives. At best, it generates unpredictable insights and new ideas.

Dialogical thinking may well be called a revolution, as Cornelius Castoriadis (1995) [14] puts it: 'Revolution means neither civil war nor bloodshed. Revolution is the change of certain fundamental institutions of society by society itself, the explicit self-transformation of society condensed into a short time [...]. Revolution means the entry of the majority of the community into a phase of political, or rather constituent, activity. The social imaginary sets to work and explicitly works specifically on the transformation of existing institutions [...]. Today, the transformation of society requires the participation of the entire population, and the population can be made sensitive to this need - with the exception of an unconverted 3-5 per cent'.

As a conclusion it is interesting to learn how the evaluation of dialogical processes, through the analysis of success and failure cases, has made it possible to identify the seven key principles specific to open dialogue and valid for dialogical practices in the broader sense as well [15]

- Immediate help, which implies being present and ready within 24/48 hours from the request for help and/or the report - identification of a possible problem, crisis. Knowing how to recognise and anticipate concerns;
- A social network-oriented perspective from which members of the social network pointed out by the person-student-colleague in difficulty and all service professionals involved in the specific situation, are invited to participate in the meetings;
- Team flexibility and mobility to adapt to the unique needs of each person, family and context;
- Responsibility, starting with the person who receives the request-signal for help who has the task of organising the first meeting, until which no decision will be made on what to do;

- Educational-psycho-social continuity, working with the same integrated team (with professionals from different services in the area if necessary, e.g. social workers, educators, child neuropsychiatry, addictions, etc.) for as long as needed;
- Tolerate uncertainty by constructing a 'safe' space in which one can also openly discuss proposed solutions, avoiding hasty decisions;
- Dialogism as the primary objective of the meetings, to improve understanding of the crisis-problem, allowing all voices to emerge and be heard. By voices we mean both those of the different people participating in the meeting (horizontal polyphony) and the internal and multiple voices evoked by the conversation in each individual participant (vertical polyphony). For instance, the manager participates in the dialogue through the voices deriving from his professional competences (such as being a manager, a teacher, a psychologist, following a certain orientation, etc.), but also with those related to his private and intimate life (being a son, a mother/father, a sister/brother, a wife/husband a former student...). Moreover, he/she participates in the dialogue with his/her conscious presence in tone, posture, comments.

### Coach's attitude

Our proposal includes other dialogical tools: the integrated approach and the 'Mediterranean way' of dialogical practices adds to the democratic practices above mentioned both the practice of relational mindfulness and relational systemic coaching.

Coaching, or better still, 'the coaching attitude' is an important element in the management and teaching profession. The experience gained in recent years allows us to state that accompanying the dialogue process in complex organisations, especially for managers, manager's staff and class coordinators - the 'middle management in schools' - so-called but yet undefined at present - and also for all teachers, with coaching and team coaching courses, has proven to be extremely facilitating and very welcome and functional [16].

Coaching in complex organisations is a concrete social realisation. Indeed, as Amartya Sen puts it: 'Concrete realisations go far beyond the organisational framework and involve the life that people manage - or fail - to live. In considering the nature of human life, we have reason to be interested not only in the many things we manage to do, but also in our actual freedom to choose between various kinds of life. [17]' Coaching is, without a doubt, a choice of freedom both on the part of the public service, with all its components, and on the part of the users. This research describes a network approach and is mainly aimed at mixed (multi-professional-multi-functional) groups of administrators, managers, operators and/or professionals from different sectors who share, or should share, local governance with users. As research by Jaakko Seikkula, Tom Arnkil and Esa Erickson [18] shows, dialogic practices

can be used in other contexts and take other forms. The dialogical approach to coaching is not only, and perhaps not primarily, about making projects, but about being and feeling listened to, about connecting to the projects and actions of others, it is also a re-generative experience of empowerment. One of the concrete results of this approach is to bring out ideas, entirely new or already established, allow different actors to connect with each other and develop new action plans in reciprocity.

Experience has highlighted the interconnectedness and interdependence of dialogue practices and coaching. Indeed, those who deal with the vast literature that exists in coaching today are confronted with a multitude of definitions and approaches. Often one finds autocratic, even dogmatic positions, enshrining the value of the uniqueness of one coaching model over another. Such attitudes certainly reflect the interest and vitality of the 'coaching - idea', but they make the understanding of the coaching culture more complicated, more confusing, less transparent and less widespread. We should add that to enrich and complicate the reflection of coaching it is the term in itself, its own history linked to contexts other than organisations, to sport and business companies. Without being exhaustive or exclusive, we will try to provide a summary of coaching, more with the aim of broadening than narrowing the meaning. Convinced that a sufficiently broad framework of the topic can be used to consider different positions as a form of diversity and thus of richness, rather than as a contradiction or ambiguity. In this sense, it is proposed to consider coaching as defined by the International Coach Federation (ICF): "An interactive process of dialogue. A partnership with clients that, through a creative process, stimulates reflection, inspires to maximise personal and professional potential."

In the words of Timothy Gallwey (1974) [19], one of the founding fathers, coaching means: 'unleashing a person's potential so that they can perform to their fullest; helping them to learn rather than merely imparting instruction'.

Coaching is an interactive process that helps individuals and organisations develop faster and produce more satisfying results. Coaches work with users on different aspects of their lives, including work, career, finances, health and relationships. As a result of the coaching process, coachee achieve goals, undertake activities, make better decisions, and learn to make full use of their own resources.

What does a coach do? The coach is the vehicle (from the Hungarian meaning of the word 'coach' = coach) through which the person and/or organisation manages to

- Discovering, clarifying and aligning objectives
- Constructing alternative interpretations of reality
- Exploring new opportunities and options
- Identifying one's own solutions and strategies
- Remove any barriers

- Creating an action plan to achieve desired results
- Recognising progress

The coach urges the person, team and/or organisation to

- Becoming aware of self and context
- Taking responsibility for successes and failures without alibis
- Working on its strengths
- Commit to action and maintain a high level of responsible commitment
- Making a commitment to do more than he would have done alone.
- Developing personal and team potential
- Staying focused to achieve what you want faster.

The vision of the public school is increasingly linked to the word 'service', to be a point of reference, a 'coach' for the community. The mission is more and more to be able to build and connect networks, being in the middle, 'between', as a linker, an inter and multicultural coach capable of promoting and realising a collective mobilisation, as Bruno Latour argues [20].

The term 'dialogical', on the other hand, indicates that coaching takes the form of a dialogue between two people, and between the people in an organisation (including their inner dialogues), and thus, in respect of how the dialogue between coach and coachee takes place, how the goals we have aimed for are 'realistic' and how they can be achieved. The multi-voice "polyphonic" concert as conceived by a dialogical approach finds in the coach its "conductor" who can take responsibility for coordination and facilitation, allowing all the orchestral players to take, in turn, their own responsibility in the dialogue and to harmonise the orchestra. The 'dialogic coach' can help to keep all processes 'open', in 'remembering the future', thus intervening in the here and now, can help to co-create the future, mediating between global and local, natural, social and environmental, as indicated by Bruno Latour (2009) [21]. The dialogical coach can help reconnect people with themselves and their contextual reality, can help people, organisations and local governance to navigate in this age of uncertainty. The dialogic coach works in what the Japanese call "BA" a shared place, a common generative space where knowledge transmission occurs, where everyone is encouraged and can overcome their physical and intellectual limitations without feeling judged. The value of the "BA" consists precisely in this dynamic process that occurs in a common space generated by a common purpose. New technologies help to expand this common space, to break down borders and improve edges and margins. People who work in the midst of networks, BETWEEN sectors, in the midst of tensions are in a very weak position, but it is precisely this weakness that gives rise to the strategic strength of these positions. A position that can be read in a '360°' mode, as suggested by Robert Arnkil's studies [9].

Over the years, in the course of meetings and interviews with coaches, administrators, executives, teachers, operators, managers, we have identified eight domains of “Dialogic Coaching” time, space, autonomy, cooperation (collaboration), communication, responsibility, leadership and project and organisation (management).

### Towards relational mindfulness

MBSTP (Mindfulness Based Students Teachers and Parents)

In short, let us present how we integrate mindfulness coaching. Meanwhile, what is Mindfulness?

The term Mindfulness is the English translation of the word ‘Sati’ in the Pali language, meaning ‘conscious attention’ or ‘naked attention’.

The Chinese ideogram for ‘mindfulness’ is ‘nian’ (read) which is a combination of two different characters, each of which has its own meaning. The upper part of the ideogram means ‘now’, while the lower part means ‘heart’ or ‘mind’. Literally the complete ideogram indicates the act of living the present moment with the heart.

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn’s definition, Mindfulness means ‘paying attention in a particular way: intentionally, in the present moment and in a non-judgmental way’ (1994) [22,23].

That is, voluntarily directing one’s attention to what is happening in and around one’s body, moment by moment, listening more carefully to one’s experience, and observing it for what it is, without evaluating or criticizing it, suspending judgement.

The practice of this particular ‘attitude of mind’, which we can also refer to as ‘mindfulness’, derives from Theravada Buddhism, one of the two major currents of Buddhist thought, which has been widespread for 2500 years in South and South-East Asia, particularly in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand, in both monastic and secular environments.

Western medicine’s use of Mindfulness for health promotion, on the other hand, is a relatively recent acquisition, which began in the 1970s in the United States (see Mindfulness-based stress reduction - MBSR protocols).

Our Mindfulness Based Students Teachers and Parents (MBSTP) proposals specifically for educational institutions and our Mindfulness Based Student Teachers and Parents (MBSTP) proposal specifically for complex organizations (MBCO) are secular proposals practicing mindfulness development, with the understanding that historically and culturally the origin of mindfulness practice is inspired by and derived from Buddhist thought. Mindfulness is a non-conceptual form of meditation that is universally accessible and does not depend on any belief system or ideology [24].

But what does Mindfulness practically consist of?

Mindfulness is, in practice, a form of meditation and therefore requires time, energy, determination, steadiness and discipline. From the point of view of mental processes, it consists of paying attention to four elements in the present moment: one’s body, one’s sensory perceptions (physiological, physical and psychological belonging to the broad domains of pleasant, unpleasant, mixed and neutral), mental formations (e.g. anger, pain or compassion) and the objects of the mind (every mental formation has an object, one is angry at someone and about something, etc.).

Observing these elements of one’s subjective experience takes place in a state of genuine non-reactive calm, in which one accepts what is observed for what it is, allowing changes to occur naturally, without hindering or promoting them and avoiding the usual resistance or judgement that causes further suffering.

### Breath meditation

Each of our meetings begins by paying attention to the conscious breath. The time devoted to this initial practice can be a very short three to five minutes at the most. We have been able to verify that dedicating this space-time at the beginning of the day, of the lessons, of the meetings improves the general climate and predisposes the participants towards a more attentive, active and responsive presence, also facilitating the learning-teaching processes.

The most effective way to begin to pay this kind of attention is to observe one’s breath, focusing on it and remaining in observation of what is happening while we are doing it. Regardless of the bodily regions in which one contextualises the breath, the mental task required by mindfulness is to seek and maintain intense awareness of the sensations that accompany the breath at that particular point in the body (nostrils, chest or belly), moment by moment.

When, inevitably, the mind tends to drift away from the here and now to focus on thoughts far away in space and time, mindfulness involves not judging or pursuing those thoughts, but gently returning attention to the breath.

In this way, you train your mind to be more stable and less reactive, and at the same time you learn to accept and cultivate each moment as it comes, increasing your natural capacity for concentration [22].

### Body scan

Another way to practiced mindfulness is to perform a systematic, careful and conscious exploration of the body, with the aim of authentically ‘feeling’ each part of the body and dwelling on each one. The technique takes its cue from a very ancient yogic practice: yoga ‘nidra’. It is a method that, when applied consistently and systematically, induces complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation.

Mindfulness can be practiced sitting (sitting meditation) or walking (walking meditation). As Kabat-Zinn states, the posture one assumes to meditate “is an external attitude that helps us cultivate an internal attitude of dignity, patience, and self-acceptance” (1990, 2016) [22].

- Seated meditation consists of assuming a dignified sitting position, either on a chair or meditation bench or on the floor aided by a cushion.

- Walking meditation (it is also suitable for people who have difficulty ‘staying’ in the stillness of a position, and as a preparation for sitting meditation) consists of cultivating internal observation and awareness of sensations while walking, concentrating on each step.

- A further way in which mindfulness can be practiced is through the various yoga practices, a series of physical exercises in the yogic tradition that are more concerned with the bodily aspect, accompanied by attention to the breath and a general attitude of acceptance of who we are, as we are, here and now. Yoga exercises teach how to achieve harmony and integration between mind and body, as well as between oneself and the environment. The possibility of experimenting with various postures and modalities connects perfectly with the different times of the day, different personal needs and requirements, and also with the different everyday life of each school institution. Let us look at the different ways of practising mindfulness:

### Informal practice

The ultimate goal of mindfulness is to generalize and extend this special way to ‘bring the attention’ to every situations and contexts of daily life. We can therefore cultivate mindfulness when looking, listening, thinking, talking, cooking, eating or working, in good times and difficult times. We are then seeing a progressive and stable transformation of our way of being, the acquisition of new mental habits. Even as we walk we can practice mindfulness, we can bring the attention to every step and rejoice rather than having our minds turned towards the goal we aim to reach. Stopping and connecting with the present moment [22] is possible while writing an email, surfing the web, washing the dishes or hanging out the laundry. Even in this instant as you are reading this page.

At any time it is possible to practise mindfulness, it is possible for it to become the subject of reflection and dialogue, it is possible to keep a personal and class ‘logbook’ with the moments of mindfulness experienced.

### What is the point of Mindfulness and who needs it?

Mindfulness is useful for anyone in health or illness, who wishes to transcend their limitations and achieve a higher level of psycho-physical well-being.

Consistent practice of mindfulness has indeed been shown to be effective in reducing stress and related illness, in relieving physical symptoms of chronic illness and, in general, in promoting profound and positive changes in attitude, behaviour and perception of oneself, others and the world. It develops attention and the ability to concentrate. It is indicated for improving teamwork and develops better resilience.

These changes can be seen in

- A greater ability to master difficulties, stressful and depressive situations in life.
- Greater awareness in everyday life and in one’s work/activities.
- Greater power for conflict management and ordinary and extraordinary problem solving.
- An increase in acceptance and patience with one’s state of illness or psychological and physical infirmities.
- A new ability of the mind to replace destructive emotions, a cause for anxiety and depression, with more constructive ways of being that promote equanimity, love and wisdom.
- Greater ability to listen and dialogue both internally and externally.
- A greater ability and willingness to work in a team.
- An improvement in attention span and concentration.

### The importance of the group

It is desirable for those who meditate to be able to practice within a group or ‘sangha’. Sangha is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘spiritual community’. The sangha is made up of people who not only meditate together during planned meetings, but also engage in unstructured ways cultivating mindfulness in daily life, living each moment deeply, practising resistance to haste, to dysfunctional and unhealthy ways of living.

The group is important for several reasons.

- it helps to maintain self-discipline.
- it facilitates learning, encourages moving forward in difficult situations or times of demotivation, it is a source of inspiration and hope for improvement, and can heal feelings of isolation and separation, cause of much of the suffering in our society.
- develops relational awareness.
- develops awareness of interdependence and interconnectedness
- develops collective learning processes.

So therefore, ‘the classroom group’ can be an excellent laboratory for experimenting with mindfulness.

The MBSTP (Mindfulness Based Students Teachers and Parents) programme is inspired by what is called in the Anglo-Saxon world “integrative medicine” or “mind-body medicine”. This has

been one of the frontiers of the area of medical and psychotherapeutic research and sees body and mind as a unity that demands to be understood without rigid divisions. A central aspect of the programme is the learning of a 'gentle' but effective method that encourages the participant to develop a deep level of research and experimentation in applying mindfulness (non-judgmental, moment-to-moment awareness) to daily life, and to consciously seek internal and external dialogue.

Participants are taught how to become more aware of the resources they already possess, including resources that are unconscious or unrecognised. In becoming able to mobilise these resources they can support their own health and well-being and deal with conditions of fatigue, stress and suffering (psychic and physical) in a more conscious and profound way.

The programme is a path to discover a way of being, not a technique. The intention is to help the participant to become more vividly aware of their breath, body, mind, of all aspects of the daily experience of life. This path enables people to be more aware and to take deep care of themselves.

Dedication and perseverance are required on the part of the participant in order to sustain the self-discipline necessary for the daily practice of mindfulness exercises offered by the programme and indeed is an essential part of it.

In addition to improving learning processes, attention, and concentration, mindfulness proposed and shared between teachers - students - families improves inter- and trans-generational relationships, the ability to dwell in uncertainty, and how to remain and transform conflicts creatively and non-violently.

### Relational mindfulness

Insight dialogue, a relational mindfulness meditation as proposed by Gregory Kramer, is a form mindfulness that complements and enriches dialogic practices and therefore chosen by us as the foundation for the MBSTP programme.

Kramer (2016) [25] has innovated the traditional solitary practice and has opened it up to the interpersonal sphere. Meditative dialogue between two or more people is actually at the heart of the formal practice he developed, and here presented in a text considered cardinal by those involved in mindfulness: Insight Dialogue. For Kramer, mindfulness meditation or insight dialogue, refers to meditative practice in all its depth and breadth as a transformative journey. Life is all about relationships, individual meditation does not take into account interpersonal interdependence and the fact that much of our suffering comes to us precisely from toxic relationships with others. If our task is reducing suffering, at least unnecessary suffering, the meditative path can only be interpersonal, shared and participated in. Twenty years of experience, all over

the world, have confirmed that the liberating and transformative potential of meditation is best released in the relational moment, when even silence becomes interactive thanks to constant practices, judgements are suspended, awareness of the other's otherness increases, and speech brings to the surface the fears and appetites by which our ego is obsessed. The capacity for self-observation is then sharpened, as we see the mechanism that feeds the mind's habitual 'fabrications' come to a halt. Whether practised on retreat, in regular groups or in everyday life, live or online, Insight Dialogue helps to drop the unnecessary burdens with which we identify.

Relational mindfulness starts with personal meditation practice and then opens up, in a literal sense, towards meditation in dyads, in small groups (4/5 people) up to a larger group (12 people, but even more according to D. Bohm, in "On Dialogue", 2014, p.73-76) [26]. A way to cultivate the wisdom that arises when one open mind meets another equally open mind.

The practice in dyads, just as in dialogic practices, is however not a form of conversation but a real meditative practice with instructions and guidelines. It helps those who need to change the quality of their dialogue with themselves, their colleagues, users (students/families) and this practice allows one to have more awareness of how words can be used, not only to meditate, but also to care. Being able to experience insight dialogue in a group, refines and improves teamwork, reduces conflict, enhances and develops integration and inclusion processes.

### The six principles of relational mindfulness

There are six guidelines - which scaffold the Insight Dialogue - for practising mindfulness in every formal and informal activity/meditation (G. Kramer, 2016) [25]

- Break
- Relax
- Open
- Trust in the Emergence
- Listen in Depth
- Tell the Truth.

In short: Break predisposes to awareness; Relax opens to tranquillity; Open to relational willingness and spaciousness; Trust in Emergence opens to flexibility and letting go; Listen in Depth to receptivity and attunement; Tell the Truth to wholeness and care.

Divided into three groups they will be easier to remember and implement: Pause-Release-Open; Trust in Emergence; Listen Deeply - Tell the Truth. As Kramer (2016) [25] says, the guidelines, taken together, offer substantial support for 'awakening', helping us to meet and cope with the intense challenges of interpersonal encounters.

### Dialogic authority vs. power

"Fathers only have 'auctoritas' if, as the term itself indicates, they create the conditions to increase opportunities, both material and spiritual, for the next generation'. M. Cacciari, *Espresso* 17/5/12

In what sense is it possible to speak of 'dialogic authority'? Why can it be important to recover and regenerate authority in a dialogical sense for managers and teachers?

'Dialogical authority' may sound like an oxymoron, or, even better, a contradiction in terms, especially if we refer to the meaning that the word 'authority' has acquired in our times. One of the many words that worn out by time has a semantic fall.

What do we mean by authority? What is its original meaning?

First of all, we would like to refer to the etymology of the word, and then specify the meaning we refer to it in this context.

For a long time, it was considered that the Greeks did not have a specific word for authority in ancient times [27]. But in fact the word does not derive, as someone may think, from the Greek root 'autòs' meaning 'self'. In ancient Greece, authority or *exousía* is presented as a distinctly different concept from the Roman concept of *auctoritas*, long held to be the model par excellence of authority. Whereas *auctoritas* designates an intrinsic quality of the auctor, of he, who by virtue of his position, is able to 'augere', i.e., to 'bring something to success', *exousía* (from the Greek *éxesti*, 'it is possible') rather indicates 'a possibility, a faculty', which the subject does not possess per se, an external agent (*ex*) assigns to him. So therefore, a characteristic specific to dialogical authority is the emerging possibility which is assigned and recognised by an external agent: the person, the group, in our case colleagues, students, families.

'Authority' therefore is not, strictly speaking, a word of Greek derivation but a Latin one, and the self itself, however authoritarian it may appear, has nothing to do with authority. Instead, the origin of the term lies in the Latin verb 'augeo', the same verb that lies at the root of other rather important words such as 'aid', 'aid', 'increase', 'author'.

"Augeo, auges, auxi, auctum, augere" primarily means to augment, raise, increase, enlarge, strengthen, empower, and hence also to honour, exalt, magnify, fertilise or enrich. 'Augeo' is in turn derived from the augmentative of a Sanskrit root meaning 'strength' in the divine sense. In the oldest Oriental language, the root 'AW' designates all words that mean: beginning and thus generate, speak, irrigate, fertilise, illuminate, weave and so on; some examples: Aurora- the rising sun and life that starts again, Auctor-that makes grow, generate, author, *donde auctoritas*, Augeo- grow, increase, Audio- listen, hear, augurium, augustum, Auxilium- help, Auspicium-augur.

People often continue to translate 'augeo' as 'to increase'; while this may be accurate in the classical language, it is not so with regard to its origin. For us, 'augment' is equivalent to 'increase', make greater something that already exists. Here lies the undetected difference with *augeo*. In its earliest uses *augeo* expresses the act of producing from one's own breast, not the act of augmenting what exists, a creative act that makes something arise from fertile soil and is the privilege of gods or great natural forces, not of men.

The primary sense of *augeo* is found with the intermediary of auctor in *auctoritas*. Every word spoken with authority brings about a change in the world, creates something; this mysterious quality is what *augeo* expresses, the power that brings plants to germinate, that gives existence to a law. He who is auctor, who promotes, only him is endowed with that quality that the Indian calls 'ojah'. Now, while it is evident that the concept of power remains unchanged in the modern meaning of authority defined as 'the legitimate power to issue binding provisions' (Hoepli Dictionary), it is also evident that much of the original meaning must have been lost along the way. Authority is power, today as in the past, there is no doubt of that. But the original meaning of this word was that of a good force, a power exercised in order to promote growth, development, increase. The power of the good king.

Authority is often confused with power. The purpose of authority is not power, but to be of assistance, to help, to promote the development of something. It is the authority exercised by the author over his work, an absolute power, certainly, but with a creative and certainly not destructive purpose, the power to forge, shape and grow 'a work of human ingenuity', it would once have been said. And it is in principle parental authority, which serves not to harass but to protect and accompany children in the delicate and vulnerable phase of development until they reach the age of reason, and therefore of responsibility. Here it is, finally, the magic word, the one that accompanies like the side of a coin every discourse claiming to be sensible about power, authority and the like. Authority is the assumption of a share of responsibility upon oneself, assumption made in order to relieve of that burden those over whom authority is exercised by fostering their growth and development, ideally up to the point where they will be able to stand on their own two feet and will no longer need protection. Authority is an attribute of power, and it is in particular the attribute that gives power its legitimacy. Unlike brute force, which also establishes power, authority ensures that those who exercise power are legitimised to do so, have the consent to do so, according to the rules proper to each specific occurrence. But the inevitable corollary is that whoever exercises authority does so with a precise mandate, which is promoting the growth and development, the increase in well being of that over which he exercises power. It is precisely this mandate that links authority to responsibility: anyone who has been delegated to exercise the power for carrying out a mandate is answerable to the person who entrusted to him the mandate, he also is account-



able for the way in which he has exercised his power with the goal of fostering the growth of what he has been entrusted with. Taking for granted the reference to parental authority as the archetype and original mould on which the very idea of authority was modelled (which seems quite plausible), another consideration comes naturally from what has been said so far. Just as parental authority changes over time, and is subject to an evolution that lightens it as children grow up and are able to take upon themselves ever greater proportions of the responsibility that precisely legitimised parental authority, the same should ideally apply to any other form of authority whose ultimate goal should therefore be to dissolve itself. A utopian goal, I do not say, but not a false one. If authority aims at growth, it aims in itself at the conditions for which it becomes less and less necessary as responsibility becomes widespread and shared.

In all this, the concept of the “power of non-power” of dialogical practices strongly emerges. An authority, recognised and attributed by the otherness of the other(s) in the moment of the encounter, an authority aimed at the possibility of growing, developing what is not yet or is hidden, unable, until now, to emerge. As Luisa Muraro (2013) says [28]: “Authority exists and can only act if it is recognised, attributed, accepted, assumed. It arises from a relationship where no one possesses it of their own. Authority is powerful because it can act, without the means of power and domination. It is a change in the relationship. We feel it when it is acknowledged to us and when we acknowledge it to others, we feel it as strength, responsibility, but also as tranquillity and reassurance, or as an incitement to act and an enhancement of our possibilities. Authority is not an expression of power but a force of freedom’.

I don't know about you, but to me the gap between what has been said and the common perception of the idea of authority seems obvious. In this sense, it is possible and desirable to speak of ‘dialogic authority’. The rejection of power historically and conceived - mainly by men - as domination, command, control, arbitrariness, self-referentiality. Often exercised more for the benefit of oneself and one's closed ‘staff’ rather than towards the educating community, networking and involving people in responsibility, moving from ‘power over’ to ‘power with’. The starting point for these leaders, of the present-future, is another conception of power and role. They do not circumscribe decision-making power to themselves, but by keeping the dialogue open they engage with all actors in the community and, above all, they take care of the processes. In fact, coercive power is positional, linked to hierarchies, and therefore consensus can be imposed or ‘bought’. The dialogic approach, on the other hand, is relational, collaborative, made up of relationships between interdependent individuals. In this meaning, managers and also teachers, as dialogical facilitators, can recognise and experiment with the ultimate goal of making their students, their organisation, autonomous, progressively dissolving authority into shared and participated responsibility. The school is a collective construction and functions well if those who lead it propose

reasonable concrete hopes for a balance between different interests, within the limits of possibility. This is the role of the SM, but also of the teachers, to bring out, recognise and enhance the shared and participated values, paying care and attention to all the subjects in the community: the school grows if all the people in it grow.

### The importance of female leadership

In 2017, according to the latest official data from the Italian Ministry of Education processed by Tuttoscuola, there were almost 700,000 female teachers on tenure track, tenured or acting as substitute in state schools, 81.7% of the 855,734 teachers at all levels of school (excluding teachers of the Catholic religion). With reference to tenured teachers, the percentage is one percentage point higher (82.7%). Compared to ten years ago, when the percentage of women tenured in the various school grades was 80.6%, the percentage has thus increased by more than two points to 82.7%. In which areas has the presence of women become more substantial? Given for granted that the situation has become almost structural for state preschools where female presence has been close to 100% for years (99.30% in 2016-17), the other sectors still deserve attention, in particular those of secondary schools. In primary school, the female percentage, which ten years ago was 95.8%, was 96.4% in 2016-17, i.e., more than half a percentage point increase. At this rate, the time is not far off when even the primary school, which a century and a half ago was almost entirely headed by male teachers, will be headed almost entirely by women.

Over the past ten years, the presence of women in lower-secondary school professorships has risen from 76.8% to 78.1%, a rather significant increase. Among secondary school teachers, the percentage of female presence is 78%.

But the most significant gender change in the last decade has been in high schools where the percentage of women has risen from 60.6% to 65.7%, a leap forward of more than five percentage points. On average, two out of three professors in secondary schools today are women. School leadership has also been involved in this process of feminisation. In fact, school leadership in the school year 1998-99, before school autonomy, that is, when the 10,839 heads of school in service were coming from the school sectors where they had worked as teachers and had been appointed after taking open competitive exams, there were 6,798 men (62.7%) and 4,041 women (37.3%): almost 2 men for every 3 heads of school. In 2015, women have begun taking over. Among the 7,448 school heads in service, men were reduced to 2,515, a third of the total, while women numbered 4,933, or 66.2%. Compared to almost two decades earlier, therefore, among school heads the gender ratio has reversed in favour of women.

Also in view of these data, we find it interesting to reflect on female leadership. In contrast to many other organisations in

schools, leadership is female. As Luisa Pogliana's (2022) [29] book "An astonishing genealogy" well points out, women's contribution to management from the nineteenth century to the present has been and is fundamental in the transformation of the governing paradigms of complex organisations.

Women's protagonism in management, as in many other fields, has been disregarded and often even silenced. Yet women from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present have contributed, thanks to women's thinking, to changing and transforming management paradigms. If, as we shall see later, today we can look at, experiment with and practise other modes of governance, we owe it mainly to women. Just to mention a few of these "founders" of women's leadership in management: Beatrice Webb (1853-1943) [30] with her work "Industrial Democracy" (1897), Mary Parker Follet (1868 - 1933) [31] considered the mother of modern management by contributing to what later became "humanistic management". Her thinking that it is not enough to have good conditions at work but rather to look at life as a whole is precursive to the concept of the welfare state. His essay: "The Creative Experience. Leadership, participation, consensus techniques in modern democracies" (1924, in en. 1994) not only anticipated alternative paradigms to the then dominant "Taylorism" but also developed a research method based on the 'participant observation' approach. The organisational structure that derives from Parker's thinking is 'more horizontal', built on human relations between the various subjects, on the authority of experience, thus reducing the hierarchy of vertical power. Parker understood leadership as the ability to make things happen through people, not because they obey the leader because he has the power, but because his vision convinces the employees, and everyone works together for a shared purpose. Another woman who made an outstanding contribution was Joan Woodward (1916 - 1971). Her book: 'Industrial Organisation: Theory and Practice' (1965, en. 1975) [32] is still one of the most important and influential books in the history of management. Woodward subverts the rules of what was the dominant paradigm of 'Scientific Management' between 1950 and 1960. A paradigm that was considered universal. Woodward argues that there is never a single best way, rather each organisation structures and governs itself according to its own psycho-socio-economic-technological-environmental characteristics. Successful organisations are those with an organisation that is functional to its characteristics, demonstrating congruence between shared values and decision-making practices. This approach is very much in line with dialogic practices as we understand them. Indeed, the network of dialogic schools exchanges experiences, compares, but each path and process is co-constructed in a piece by piece.

As can be seen from the above, the contribution of women's thought to management has been varied and profound and if often disregarded. Many contributions have been made. Not being able to mention them all here, and by way of example only, we would like to mention: Lisl Klein (1928 - 2015) [33] with her research on "The

meaning of work" (1963, 2008) and the socio-technical approach; Marie Jahoda (1907 - 2001) psychoanalyst partner who highlights the social psychology of the invisible in organisations. We close this review, which is only explanatory, with two women who still influence management processes and culture today. The first is Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1943, 1988) [34] considered the first woman recognised as a management 'guru'. Her books are about innovation and change, which she makes very much dependent on the participative approach. Furthermore, with her book: 'Masculine and feminine in business. Two Cultures Compared' (1977, en. 1988) she explores and deepens the situation of women in corporate dynamics and complex organisations. This review cannot fail to include Marisa Bellisario (1935 - 1988), a protagonist of Italian and other managerial history. Her ability to read organisations and find creative solutions to save companies in a pre-bankruptcy state still sets the standard. Moreover, Bellisario can well be defined as a dispenser of 'reasonable hopes'. One of her phrases renders her approach to the recovery plans she presented well: 'Management must take into account the social and political problems of the environment in which it operates. In organisations, especially when they are in disarray, there must be clear commitments to the community'. This excursus cannot fail to include great women who revolutionised educational and dialogic thinking. For Italy, the well-known Maria Montessori and Vittorina Gementi, while for dialogic practices, at the international level, one among many, Ivana Markova, especially with regard to democratic processes in governance. Markova is the protagonist of a 'dialogical turn', emphasising the importance of social relations and interaction for our behaviour and how we make sense of the world. In 'Dialogical Mind', Markova [35] emphasises how it is the mind in interaction with others - with individuals, groups, institutions and cultures in historical perspectives that co-constructs democratic meaning. Through a combination of rigorous theoretical work and empirical investigation, Markova presents an ethics of dialogicality as an alternative to the narrow perspective of individualism and cognitivism that has traditionally dominated the field of social psychology. The dialogical perspective, which focuses on the interdependencies between the self and others, offers a powerful theoretical basis for understanding, analysing and discussing social issues especially in complex organisations. Markova considers the implications of dialogical epistemology both in everyday life and in professional practices involving issues of education, communication, care and therapy.

Schools are in the enviable position of being a great laboratory of 'female' leadership. Women in school can make a great contribution to the transformation not only of school organisation but also become very influential in the governance processes of local communities and in the research and practice of new paradigms. Many school leaders and teachers have the creativity, the skills, the courage, the perseverance and the reasonable hope to lead the ongoing transformation process.

### Transformational leadership based on values

Leadership can be defined as the trait, or traits, of leading or directing others towards an outcome, goal or vision. What does a leader do? What are the styles or modes of operation that enable one person to be an effective leader while others lack? Clearly not all leaders have the same methods for guiding, supporting, communicating and convincing their organisation towards the mission and vision. Today's pope and a 16th century pope would have differing views on the appropriate leadership style. Headmasters of different schools may have contradictory views on the best method of leadership. In this article, we address transformational leadership from the perspective of educational service. Of course there are different leadership styles. Not all traits of a leadership style are necessarily unique to that style. There is a certain amount of crossover in traits, but there are definite differences that discriminate one leadership style from another.

Transformational leadership is a process in which leaders take actions to try to increase awareness of what is important and fundamental. In addition, it is a process to increase motivational and intentional maturity, to go beyond one's personal interests for the good of the school or society. This type of leader provides others with a purpose that goes beyond a simple exchange of rewards for the effort provided.

Transformational leaders are proactive in many different and unique ways. These leaders seek to optimise performance, but not only and not so much, more importantly development. Development includes factors such as increasing and raising awareness of skills, competencies, motivation, attitudes and values. They support others to strive for a higher level of achievement, as well as higher levels of moral and ethical standards. Through the development of their teachers, they also optimise the development of their school. High performing teachers create high performing organisations. This article seeks to define how transformational leadership can change the way leaders and teachers live and act, offers insights, realistic strategies and reasonable hopes for implementing this leadership style, and argues why a transformational system helps to improve the educational community as a whole.

In 1978, James McGregor Burns [36] first proposed the idea of transformational leadership, which was later expanded upon by Bernard Bass (Liontos, 1992) [37]. Although they based their work on business executives, army officers and political leaders, the principles of transformational leadership can be extended to schools (Liontos, 1992) [38]. One of the earliest examples of transformational leadership was documented in companies and became known as the stakeholder theory. There has been a gradual shift from Type A activity, in which control is highly centralised and differences in the status of workers are maintained, to Type Z activity which is based on facilitated (decentralised) power manifested through other people rather than over other people (Leithwood,

1992) [39]. Stakeholder theory sees organisations as composed of various groups (workers, managers, customers, suppliers and so on, and for schools: teachers, administrative-technical-aides, students, families, local authorities...), who all have a legitimate strategic and moral interest in the organisation but may have different values, beliefs and so on. Therefore, in order to achieve an organisation that is beneficial to everyone, people need to unite and cooperate on the basis of values, interests and social choices (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) [37]. In schools, one is concerned with finding a way to be successful by collaboratively defining the essential purpose of teaching-learning and thereby making the entire educational community responsible and authoritative to become proactive, energetic and focused.

Leithwood (1992) [39] defines transformational leadership as leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a group's mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment and the restructuring of their relational systems and procedures for achieving goals. It is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts people into leaders and can convert leaders into moral agents [40]. Thus, transformational leadership is founded on moral values and foundations (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) [37].

Transformational leadership contains four components.

personal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Personal influence through presence and consistent behaviour enables high standards to be set and practised through emulation; inspirational motivation provides all members with challenges and meaning to engage; intellectual stimulation facilitates dialogue between organisational members generating more creative solutions to problems faced; individualised consideration treats each team member as an individual by offering opportunities for coaching, mentoring, growth (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) [37].

Authentic transformational leadership, therefore, is characterised by high moral and ethical standards in each of these four domains.

Authentic transformational leaders are expected to promote ethical policies, procedures and processes within their organisations. They consistently engage in the practice of a clearly stated and consistently applied code of ethical conduct and promote an organisational culture with shared high ethical standards for better internalisation by all members of the organisation. The inspirational appeals of the authentic transformational leader tend to focus on the best of people, on their strengths. Leaders are genuinely concerned about the good that can be achieved for their group and, through generous listening, openly make the necessary changes based on the merit and relevance of the ideas of the organisation's members (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) [37].

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) [37] conclude that leaders are authentically transformative when they raise awareness of what is considered right, good and important, when they help to elevate everyone's and everyone's needs for fulfilment and self-fulfilment, when they promote greater moral awareness, and when they push everyone to go beyond their personal interests for the good of their group.

Transformational leadership has also been criticised and its ethicality questioned. Its critics have suggested five arguments against its ethicality. First, they believe that because transformational leadership uses impression management, it lends itself to an amoral outcome. Second, they see it as antagonistic to organisational learning and development that involves shared leadership, equality, consensus and decision-making. Third, they believe it encourages employees to go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the organisation and, thus, may irrationally engage them in the pursuit of evil ends contrary to the best interests of the members themselves. Fourth, they see it as leadership that tends to manipulate co-workers and employees into losing more than they gain. Finally, they suggest that transformational leadership lacks the checks and balances of countervailing interests, influences and power to avoid a soft form of dictatorship and the oppression of a minority by the majority (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) [37].

However, it is believed that these critics fail to see the positive aspects of transformational leadership. Rather than being unethical, authentic transformational leaders identify, in a shared and participatory manner, the core values and unifying purposes of the organisation and its members, unleash their potential, and promote pluralistic leadership for the satisfaction of each and every one.

In schools, transformational leaders pursue three main objectives: to help staff members develop and maintain a collaborative and professional school environment; to foster teacher development; and to help teachers solve problems more effectively (Leithwood, 1992, Liontos, 1992) [38,39].

- Help staff members develop and maintain a collaborative and professional school environment. In a collaborative school environment, staff members often talk, observe, criticise and plan together. The norms of collective responsibility and continuous improvement encourage staff to teach each other and, as a result, they learn to apprehend and to teach better. Some of the strategies used by leaders to build and maintain collaborative school cultures include involving staff members by setting goals and reducing teacher isolation. To support cultural change, they use all existing regulatory, administrative, and bureaucratic supports and mechanisms to flesh out the mission of their particular school. School leaders are therefore responsible for actively communicating the school's values, norms and cultural beliefs and sharing leadership with others by delegating power to specific school improvement teams (acting on an appointed staff) for ameliorating the school.

- Foster teacher development. Motivation for teacher development increases when professional development goals are internalised. This process is facilitated when they are committed to the school's mission that has been shared and participated in. Teachers' development can be enhanced by giving them a role in problem-solving for school improvement, not just routine. Furthermore, it is important that the goals are clear, explicit and challenging but not unrealistic. Practising and sharing reasonable hopes facilitates personal and professional growth.
- Helping teachers solve problems more effectively. In order to achieve significant school improvement, it is necessary for staff members to work at their best, making conscious use of space, time and resources. Transformational leadership acts on teachers and the community as an encouraging incentive to increase involvement in change processes, new activities and to produce kind 'extra efforts'. However, Leithwood (1992) [39] identified practices that transformational leaders use primarily to help staff to work smarter but not harder. These leaders provide a broader range of perspectives and points of view on which to confront and read different issues. Furthermore, they help and implement, through dialogic practices, alternative solutions, keeping the balance of the group between relationship and task without losing sight of either; they make sure that teachers pay more attention to process than content. The most significant belief held by these leaders is that the members of their appointed staff are in a better position to develop solutions than the Head teacher alone.

#### From the traditional (often unconscious) school leadership model to the values model

Fifty years ago, most people would have looked at the year 2022 and imagined a hyper-technological world; reality, in some cases, has surpassed fantasy. Now that we are in the new millennium, we see that although many things have changed, many have, instead, remained the same. Daily life in most of our schools, for example, has formally changed very little. The traditional roles of headmaster, teachers and administrators and the divide between them are still practised and maintained in many schools. These traditional roles, the fixity of 'non-careers', are still experienced in this way and hinder the necessary innovative processes that schools urgently need.

Traditionally, a teacher's day is centred on his or her classroom, one room, one blackboard, one desk and between twenty and thirty smaller desks. Most schools have only a few interactive whiteboard units, but many teachers now make use of interactive whiteboards, and the recent pandemic has added distance learning practices in all its forms.

During the day, the teacher meets with different groups of students. In most cases, the teacher lectures or works through examples while the students listen and, at the most, they take notes.

Often, the school is still based on the transmission of knowledge and answers rather than on the pursuit of questions.

Outside of class time, teachers generally spend their time compiling documents, reports, questionnaires, minutes, photocopies, etc. Quite often, teachers have very little contact with other colleagues, except for moments in the teacher's room, class councils, teaching colleges and a few working and/or planning groups. Communication with administrators is often limited to fleeting and formal meetings. Communication with the school headmaster (henceforth SM) is also often scarcely relevant from a relational point of view. As is the nature of the job, teachers spend most of their time with students or alone, even though teaching has long been a 'team sport'. They are left to interpret their classrooms according to their own impressions with few meetings with colleagues and sporadic references, input and contributions from external sources.

Although teachers often do not feel that they have received and are receiving adequate training in order to be able to work effectively, in-service training is still a highly controversial element. The obvious need for continuous training, a prerequisite for being able to carry out the profession adequately, cannot be delegated to the individual initiative of a few. Teachers are therefore often left to make their own decisions on methodology in an isolated self-referential manner. Moments in which teachers can confront themselves with colleagues to share methods, didactics, experiences, concerns, are rare, unfortunately.

Leadership in schools is traditionally almost always entrusted to the Head teacher.

In the traditional school, the main rules are followed quite rigidly. The curriculum, even though ministerial programmes have not existed since 1974 - replaced by guidelines - is still perceived and defined as coming from an external source. The SM, still the Headmaster for many, is often held responsible for organising the curriculum and directing its implementation, even though this responsibility is collegial, in fact it belongs to the Board of Teachers. The SM-principal supervises all teachers and is the person to whom all are accountable. The SM is responsible for the management of the school as a whole. They organise the finances and budgets, together with the administrative director, manage student disciplinary issues, take care of relations with families and the local area. They plan the school timetable, allocate resources and manage all other aspects of administration.

The relationship between teachers and administrators is often quite contradictory. The way of governance of the leadership often requires teachers to behave in a subordinate manner with little proactivity in decision-making and organisational processes. With the exception for evaluations and discussions about discipline, teachers consider their contact with the administration to be an unimportant 'bureaucratic' burden on their teaching-learning ac-

tion. This type of system tends not to evaluate, recognise and reward real competence. The teacher's real competences are often not evaluated in any direct way. Teachers may spend their free time planning new and creative lessons, or they may not bother and simply do the bare minimum. The truth is that taking the time to create fascinating lessons, to seek generative educational alliances with students and families, to promote teamwork, leads to no recognition, while failure to do so leads to no concrete consequences.

Ideally, we would like schools to be well-run and productive organisations. This is a 'reasonable hope' and is already in place in several situations that vary according to the area in our country. Schools should focus on students, facilitate learning and be open centres for the growth of the educational community. Leaders, teachers and administrators should work together, collaboratively and productively, to establish and implement shared and participatory values and educational policy. Unfortunately, the traditional model of leadership in schools simply does not achieve this goal. The traditional model envisages that the ministry draws up policies in isolation from the SM and the teachers, that the SM and a limited number of teachers, the staff, draw up without the involvement of the other teachers and also of the students and families, which is, moreover, required by the legislation, in this case disregarded, the PTOF (Three Year Educational Offer Plan), the RAV (Self Assessment Report) and the consequent PDM (improvement plan), as well as all the other value and foundational documents. Teachers practice teaching methods and methodologies without reference or input from their colleagues or external sources. When the administration and SM establish a hierarchical form of authority, as in the traditional model, they communicate to teachers, but also to students, families and stakeholders, the assumption that they are 'subordinates', this structure tells teachers, and everyone else, that their knowledge is not valuable and that their input would not be an asset. Despite the fact that SMs and teachers are responsible for the implementation of educational policies, that they are well equipped by their experience to identify potential problems in curriculum development and other issues, that they are the only ones exposed in the community and in the classroom on a regular and daily basis, despite all this their consultation is not required when educational policies are decided. When consultation has been initiated, as it has happened in recent past, it has been done pro forma and rhetorically, often through questionnaires that were never followed up and with no impact on policy decisions. SMs and teachers have extensive knowledge of the dynamics of the educational community and classrooms and have an idea of what might work and what might not. Unfortunately, if it is true that SMs and teachers are not invited to take part in the decision-making process on educational policies, it is also true that in most cases they do not come forward asking to be convened, integrated and listened to. Among other things, trade union representativeness has also weakened a great deal in recent decades. Indeed, managers and teachers work in a system that disqualifies them and basically tells them that they 'know nothing', but this should not limit their initiative from the

local to the global level. In this respect, they could start at the local level with school participation in Area Plans, Community Pacts and other territorial planning, programme agreements, etc. Traditional leadership, often unconscious, and the hierarchical organisational model, as we have seen, hinders innovation in the education system. The latest decisions, concerning the opportunities granted by the NRP, have disappointed expectations. Once again, in fact, the hope of a teaching career innovation, which would have led to a dynamic organisational change by promoting and enhancing widespread educational leadership, has not been addressed. The presence in schools of managers and teachers as true educational 'team leaders' would greatly facilitate the life of the school in a decisive and generative way. The most valuable resources of our education system are the leaders, teachers and students, resources that are systematically marginalised in the reform programmes. Among other things, this marginalisation is increasingly alienating young people from teaching careers. The administration often denounces a resistance to change on the part of the teaching class, resulting in the slowness of any reform process. The facts say otherwise, the real school is much different and much more than the one conceived and designed by the reforms, and the response offered during the pandemic was clear proof of this. Perhaps resistance could also be a response to the lack of involvement in decision-making processes. Yet since the 1970s participatory democratic practices for improving organisational processes have been known and practised. In our school this is not yet happening, in other realities the dialogic and participatory mode is the substance of continuous innovation. Transformational leadership can be one of the keys to change.

Especially in the last ten years we have witnessed emergency leadership. One in which SMs, as leaders, have done whatever circumstances demanded. This situational leadership style, although on the surface appearing logical and prudent, has a serious drawback for a leader. Under normal circumstances, a leader can be respectful of the wishes of his co-workers and employees. When the situation demands it, the same leader may take an intransigent stance with his employees. The result is that normal trust is broken and it is difficult for the leader to be seen in the same light as before. Changing according to the situation may, as mentioned above, seem logical, but in fact it can become destructive as trust in the leader has been eroded and destroyed by 'situational' decisions that override shared values and people. The leader will find it difficult to lead people because his reasons will always be questioned even by his own staff members. One of the dangers of this leadership style is that after assuming leadership roles, reasonable men and women become authoritarian despots, autocrats, rather than authoritative. The leader has no specific principle to act as a guiding light in charting a course for his or her followers. Therefore, they move from one idea to another and from one plan to another depending on the situation and according to convenience, sometimes personal and of very short horizon.

An alternative to leadership based on situational contingency is values-based leadership. Values-based leaders listen to their community because they respect it and because they honestly believe that the well-being of the community is the goal of leadership (and not that the community is the means to achieve the leader's goals). The values-based leader is very often aware of the needs and desires of his or her community. This does not mean that the values-based leader submits to every whim and desire of the community. The values-based leader has the capacity to look at the bigger picture and has the ability to see what the community desires in its essence beyond particularisms. The values-based leader operates on a moral principle and has a shared vision of what his community wants and needs. Eventually, the leader's vision becomes the vision of the educating community because it is co-built on the foundation of their needs and aspirations. This type of leadership does not depend on circumstances: it depends on the attitudes, values and actions of the leaders, of each and every one. The values-based leader does not lead in isolation, but also inspires others to lead. The leader then becomes a leader of leaders. In this situation, the leader is no longer the sole driving force, but has inspired others to work towards the common goal and participate in the transformation of their school, society, or group. Values-based leadership has no room for the cynicism of manipulative or contingency-based leadership, it is based on moral principles that respect the vision and wishes of the community. The values-based leader overcomes the chronic and inevitable pattern of resistance to change in one way only: by co-constructing a shared and participatory value system, allowing others to adopt it as their own. This is the essence of values-based leadership.

It is a simple fact that people work more effectively and are happier in their work when they feel valued, respected and involved. Teachers are valuable resources with a wealth of useful knowledge and skills. The structure that currently exists in schools often fails to tap into this knowledge and expertise. Teachers are, perhaps, the best judges of what will and will not work in the classroom environment, and their input should be sought and solicited. As a society and as an educational community, we need to start talking about reforms, not only of the curriculum and approach to students, but also of how teachers are viewed and evaluated by the general public. We need to move towards a system where all our resources are used to full advantage, a system where teachers are respected participants, not just subordinates.

According to Leithwood (1992) [39], transformational leadership has a considerable influence on teacher collaboration and there is a significant relationship between its aspects and changes in teachers' attitudes towards school improvement and methodological teaching processes. To achieve this change, the transformational leader promotes the model values of honesty, fairness

and equity and the ultimate values of justice, equality and human rights [37]. Many of the problems encountered by SM and teachers concern issues of values, ethics and vision [40]. Transformational leadership is becoming a point of reference in the functioning of many educational institutions, especially in the concrete practice of shared and participatory values. In the light of the above, let us see how the roles for the SM-principal and teachers could change and are changing.

### How the role of the teacher is changing between new trends and needs: it's a team sport

Schools and their staff need to be constantly aware of changing international trends in order for their students to be able to cope successfully in society.

What should we teach? Let us try to indicate seven elements on which to base present-future teaching in order to navigate uncertainty: complex thinking, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, change and dialogicality. It is a matter of integrating discipline-specific technical knowledge and developing useful life skills, which we can call transversal competences, as tools to distinguish 'the wheat from the chaff'. The awareness of discontinuity and uncertainty characterises the present-future reality; whose only inescapable certainty is and will be the continuous and sudden change. The most urgent problem facing educational systems is relational. As Rovelli says: "It is not things that can enter into relationships, but it is relationships that give rise to things. The events of nature are always interactions. All events in one system occur to another system' (Rovelli, 2014) [41].

Over the past decade, the role of the teacher has expanded and deepened. Teachers are expected to make a difference in students' lives by becoming experts in change management. It is not yet determined how far these changes will go, but there is no doubt that radical changes in the teaching profession are needed for students to benefit from the changing world.

The first fact to emerge from the analysis of the education system is that the complexity of educational processes has made teaching 'a team sport'. What before, perhaps, could be tackled in the solitude of the 'pedagogue' today requires not only collegiality but also openness to multi-professional teams.

One of the trends facing teachers in today's classrooms, for example, is the multicultural composition of class groups. More and more we see classrooms made up of a cultural mix. It is necessary for the teaching team to be aware of this, to become aware of it, and to try, with awareness, to implement intercultural learning-teaching pathways and processes. When planning lessons, the teaching team must remember to refer to the minority cultures in their class groups. Referring only to the majority culture disadvantages every-

one in the class, since only the minority cultures feel excluded from the conversation and the group, and the majority culture is not given the opportunity to learn about other cultures in the world. Furthermore, when group projects are planned, teachers can ensure that there is a good mixture of cultures in each group. This will give all students the opportunity to work together in an intercultural environment. Today, people are moving to all parts of the globe to survive, find work and experience life. The teaching team also works to prepare the students mentally and culturally to both welcome and facilitate their eventual move to another country for work.

Teachers also need to be aware of gender and sexual issues in the classroom and school in general. Unfortunately, in gender and sexuality education, schools continue to be very deficient. Schools continue to be often absent in countering violence against women, for example. The aspect of prevention by focusing on education is often neglected or not considered by institutions, although experts and operators of anti-violence centres have been stressing its importance for years.

Preventing violence means completely changing the way men and women relate to each other. It means overcoming all those stereotypes that reinforce the feeling of inadequacy of little girls, girls and then women, especially with respect to those areas that have hitherto been predominantly the preserve of males. These stereotypes are internalised from an early age because they are also conveyed, more or less consciously, by teachers and also by the choice of textbooks for example. The teacher must pay more attention to gender and sexuality issues.

Another trend that teachers have to face is the reality that parents are becoming more involved in schools. More and more parents are talking openly about the way their children are taught and what is taught to their children in schools. Parents are taking on a more active role and teachers need to be increasingly alert to generate new opportunities for educational alliances.

Last but not least, the trend that teachers have to deal with is the ever-evolving and increasing information and communication technology. Since computers, smartphones, and tablets have entered classrooms, technology has exploded as an educational issue. Just like reading and writing, the ability to use a device has become a prerequisite for student success, as well as a life skill.

This means for teachers that they must learn to use and become familiar with computer technology with a view to teaching it to their students. Moreover, technology introduces a wide variety of opportunities into the classroom. Students can learn so much with new technologies, but it is up to teachers to teach them to recognise sources, to be able to discern between the different information that invades the web on a daily basis.

Technology occupies a special place in the classroom as a powerful tool for children's learning. Traditional classroom tools such as pencils, notebooks and texts are still vital. However, for children to assemble and edit their ideas, access information and study them, the use of traditional tools alone is inadequate. Computers, videos and other technologies engage children with the immediacy they are used to in everyday life. Therefore, the focus should be shifted from what type of equipment is used in the classroom, to how that equipment is used. It is the how that will make the difference. The new role of the teacher will be considerably more complex as he/she will have multiple functions/tasks/functions.

Teachers are already having, and increasingly will have, many roles: lecturer, project manager, tutor, coach... The teacher, even now, is a member of a team and not the core of the class. Teachers will increasingly become relational experts, provide technical assistance and creative advice; rather than directing pupils towards predefined tasks they will facilitate them towards creative tasks to be co-created.

Teachers are increasingly aware that the IT revolution has created an unexpected by-product. The consequence of this has been the emergence of a generation of children and young people weaned on social media, multidimensional and interactive media sources. A generation whose understanding and expectations of the world differ profoundly from those of previous generations. Teachers today must strive to provide these children and young people with the education they need to succeed in this technologically intensive and global world. There is a need for new forms of educational practice that build on children's indigenous learning and technological skills to progressively replace existing methods. Increasingly, it will be necessary to hybridise the analogue culture, typical of teachers, with the digital culture, typical of students. There are many schools that have remained in the past, while our students were born in the future. The result is a discrepancy between learner and educator. However, it is not the children that do not correspond to the schools but the schools do not correspond to the children. Only by reviewing educational practice in the light of how our culture has changed can we bridge this gap and reunite our schools with our children and the rest of our society. The teacher increasingly plays an active role in this transition by having a greater knowledge base and using interactive methods to promote a positive learning environment for all students in an enriched environment that is undergoing great change.

Research in the field of neuroscience has also improved our knowledge with respect to learning processes. These scientific contributions are undoubtedly an important resource, but they are also a problem for teachers, as it forces them into continuous training. The traditional way of learning is no longer accepted in today's society. This traditional way of learning involved students listening to the teacher and answering the questions they were asked. They sat

in rows and did their work in their individual desks, such a set-up is now perceived as boring and of little interest and involvement, and most learning was based on memorisation rather than reflection. Today, learning takes on a more interactive approach. Classrooms are not always arranged in rows, but take the form of circles, horseshoes, open spaces. Students work together in groups where they discuss and exchange ideas with each other. In addition, films and other aids are used to help pupils understand the topics discussed in class on a more engaging scale. Increasingly, witnesses, former students and guest speakers are brought in as guests to explore current topics. When pupils see that the material they are studying has some use in the outside world, they seem to enjoy more learning it. Students can apply what they have learnt to a real situation. This does not mean abandoning what the 'old' disciplines still have to say and give that is important, especially as far as the educational co-construction of a planetary citizen is concerned; in short, one can 'innovate by preserving'.

Teachers need to prepare well in advance for this type of activity. At the beginning it takes a lot of time and effort for teachers to acquire this type of educational approach. A lot of creativity and the capability to stay in uncertainty and manage the situation is required of teachers. This approach is very rewarding for everyone involved in the learning-teaching process. When students are able to apply knowledge and practise skills, teachers are aware and have clear evidence that they have done a good job.

Increased violent conflict, verbal and physical, is also a growing trend. This is something that neither managers nor teachers were and are prepared to deal with. Knowing how to be in conflict, how to handle it constructively, how to transform it, creatively and non-violently, is one of the new skills required.

Any behaviour that is risky or considered risky should be reported immediately since it could mean the difference between life and death. Trends are constantly changing and, although it may be difficult, it is essential to keep up. The success of students, teachers and schools depends on it. Knowing how to recognise, anticipate and share concerns in time, for example, can be crucial in preventing initially solvable situations from becoming irretrievably serious.

The knowledge and skills base for what teachers need to know and to be able to do has been broadened and deepened compared to the traditional role of the teacher. Nowadays, the new teaching role incorporates many new domains and takes on many new, for now informal but decisive roles. These, among others, include: engaging in moral judgement, deepening their understanding and knowledge of psycho-pedagogy, neuroscience, technology, working in highly interactive and collaborative ways. They will also be able/need to contribute ideas for adapting old structures by enriching learning environments, learn to work effectively and joyfully in



teams, develop habits and skills of continuous research and learning, and become experts in facilitating change processes.

Teachers of the present-future are more and more called upon to make a difference in the lives of their students and the life of the community: more important, more active, more visible and more problematic. Their values, their daily practice and their consistency become more and more significant.

Teachers are already working more intensively and constantly on the vision of their institution and the specific vision of their classrooms that evolves from values towards a much more sophisticated understanding of teaching and learning. It is becoming rather fundamental for teachers of the present-future to move from transmissive teaching to a dialogical pedagogy, aimed at the ability to ask questions, to critically problematise different disciplines, to develop life skills and finally to teach how to learn with enthusiasm.

Increasingly, the practice of a 'critical pedagogy' that is fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge is required. Knowledge is socially constructed and deeply rooted in power relations. Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge is constructed that way, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimised by the dominant culture, while others are not [42].

Therefore, teachers are committed to generating dialogical spaces understood as: a physical space, a space of presence, a mental, temporal, social, discursive space that are simultaneously generated in each meeting and thus in each lesson. All these spaces are interdependent and all together contribute to generating a dialogical polyphony capable of improving the climate of the class and/or colleagues' group, of relations with families, but also of supporting learning-teaching processes.

As Tom Arnkil says [10]: "When managers and teachers are confronted with situations that fuel their concerns, they may be tempted to take shortcuts (to gain more control) and to assume an authoritarian style, rather than a dialogic mode. It is necessary, however, to reiterate that the groove between dialogic and authoritarian styles does not correspond to a distinction between good and bad, since certain unilateral actions and dialogic moments may coexist in every encounter. For instance, if people have to be taken out of a burning building, precise commands are required to be followed to the letter (and nothing dialogic); there are plenty of other situations, far less dramatic, where an intervention by authority is the best solution. Nevertheless, there are situations in which dialogic proposals are more appropriate, even if someone feels the urge to take unilateral control. Relationship practitioners constantly find themselves involved in situations of this kind; these are precisely the situations in which the possibility of activating and maintaining active dialogical spaces is particularly put to the test and may turn out to be the trump card'.

As we have seen, the teacher is part of a team and participates in a complex and exciting team sport. Today's teacher works in highly interactive and collaborative ways, avoiding the pitfalls of rhetorical and dispersive collegiality. He or she works effectively and productively with other teachers, management, administrators, parents, and community institutions and agencies. The teacher can also develop partnerships within the community, in many cases already doing so, with local agencies to improve relationships and open direct communication between students and the outside world.

This broadens the skills base for teachers of the present-future compared to teachers of the present-past. This makes career development reform and in-service training even more necessary, reform that would allow teachers to engage, qualify and be involved in collaborative, teamwork cultures within and outside school. Teachers can also develop partnerships within the community with local business agencies to improve relationships and open direct communication between students and the outside world.

The new role of the teacher requires a new educational alliance and the dialogic practice of transformational leadership. Structures also need to change. Creating 'enriched' environments for learning is now indispensable. These structures will include, in some cases they already do include, spaces for small group work of students and teachers. Small group teaching will become common practice. There will be a need for common planning times, connections and new alliances with parents and the community, and participation in wider networks. Teachers of the present-future will spend less time in face-to-face classroom teaching, more time interacting with other teachers, more time preparing and assessing learning, and will share common rooms and studios for working within the school.

Teachers as learning facilitators, as educational team leaders, are themselves learning to take on the mindset of a perpetually learning learner, an eternally curious learner.

The 'new role' of teachers is being concretely and gradually integrated into educational institutions. Most teachers and educators who use innovative approaches and technologies to implement alternative types of pedagogy and curriculum are referred to as 'pioneers'. These are the people who see continuous change and growth as an integral part of their profession and are the ones who are willing to walk 'in a stubborn and contrary direction' to conventional operating procedures. However, in order to achieve large-scale changes in standard educational practices, many more teachers need to be helped to modify their pedagogical approaches.

Dialogical practices, as experienced and experienced by the Dialogue School Network, can help teachers cope with these epochal changes.

### How the role of the Headmaster-Principal is changing

Headmasters as transformational leaders have taken on exciting new roles as they continue to address the changing face of education. These leader-principals use their knowledge and skills to work both inside and outside the school organisation to chart new directions, to protect and mobilise old and new resources, and to respond to present and perceived future challenges. Effective headmasters in today's school system assume that change is inevitable, necessary and indeed, strive to provoke it. This part of the article will focus on 1) the important traits and values that today's headmasters need to possess in order to lead in a transformative way, 2) headmasters as agents of change, 3) headmasters as leaders, and 4) their responsibility to ensure inclusive education for a complex educational community in its constant and changing diversity.

### Traits and values

Deal and Peterson (1994, 1998) [43] state that school headmasters (henceforth SM) must possess both technical and symbolic traits. That is, they must think logically, but at the same time be expressive and passionate, like an artist. Their technical roles include those of: planner, resource allocator, coordinator, supervisor, disseminator, jurist, guardian and analyst. In terms of symbolic roles, the SM is considered a historian, anthropological investigator, visionary, symbol, potter, poet, actor and leader (Fullan, 1996) [44]. SMs possessing these characteristics can facilitate internal leadership, communication within the system hierarchy, the management of the school environment and the evaluation of the effectiveness and development of school accountability.

In addition to these traits, there are also some values that have emerged from various research in the field, which SMs need for leadership in the school of the present-future. The first is openness to participation: it is important to encourage teachers and students to actively participate in any discussions or decisions that affect them. The second is openness to diversity: valuing diversity of perspectives leads to a deeper understanding of organisational reality and an enriched knowledge base for decision-making. The third value is openness to conflict: resolving it in a 'healthy', creative and non-violent way leads to concrete solutions to complex problems. The fourth is openness to reflective thinking: reflecting on one's own thinking and that of others enables SMs to make better organisational decisions. Last but not least is openness to mistakes: effective SMs recognise their mistakes and learn from them. Indeed, practising dialogicality also means creating a climate of trust in which error is part of the learning process, not a sign of incapacity.

It is not always easy to convince people that change is good. SMs need to be resourceful and creative in their efforts to implement and respond to change. To be change leaders, SMs need to immerse themselves in real reform situations and begin to build their own theories of change, constantly testing them in new situations and against the demands and expectations of others (Fullan, 1996) [44].

### SM as agents of change

Change often meets with resistance, in one form or another, from teachers, students or parents. This is, however, a good thing. A culture that represses disagreement is a culture destined to stagnate, because change almost always starts with disagreement. The challenge for SMs is to make it easy for staff/students/parents to talk about their concerns, to really listen to them and to pick up insights and new ways of thinking. This generates myriad more productive actions and reactions to situations of change.

The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen schools facing new complexities, of which many are completely unfamiliar, and many demands for change from students, the educational community and the productive world of work. SMs are at the forefront of this transition. In fact, one of the new tasks of the SM is precisely that of educating its educating community in complexity. The process of restructuring, upgrading and re-educating schools requires SMs to know that both traditional individualism and collaboration must coexist. They must know that differences, diversities and conflicts are not only inevitable, but often contain the seeds of breakthroughs, both in learning and in creating a new unique school culture. It is crucial that SMs share ownership of this ongoing 'informal reform' with teachers, students and parents. Christensen (1994) [45] found that the main behaviours of SMs normally involved in school reforms are 'communicating goals', 'sharing decision-making', 'creating/articulating the school vision' and 'supporting staff'.

The SM, immersed in leadership for change, acknowledges the emergence of new forms of participation in school life as part of a systemic change in the relationship between communities and schools, recognizes that this is inevitable and contains the seeds of a necessary new alliance with the family and other social agencies. This new alliance helps mobilize the forces and resources for change by developing the capacities of parents, teachers, students and SM as leaders in 'group problem solving', 'dealing with conflict' and 'making content expertise accessible by monitoring processes'. The SM, as an agent of change, is in the 'TRA', meaning he/she promotes, develops and supports these new forms of democratic participation.

In short, SMs as agents of change must be prepared and embrace complexity, resilience, uncertainty, share ownership of change, develop positive relationships with each and everyone, and navigate the complex two-way relationship between school and state. It is important that SMs train themselves to develop leadership for change skills, learn to be more aware of their own destiny and that of their community, which as Morin says in 'The Challenge of Complexity' (2017) [46-48] is precisely a 'community of destiny'.

### Headmasters as Managers: i.e. manager is not a bad word

The original concept of the manager, as defined by James Burnham (1941, en. 1946) [49] is 'the technician of the management

of power'. With reference to the concept of authority vs. power seen earlier, we see how the SM, in effect, must know how to know and manage power. Ikujiro Nonaka, one of the most influential and revolutionary contemporary scholars of management and complex organisations says: "Management is not a matter of techniques or methods, it is a matter of values. (...) People who made innovation have always started from their convictions. Their convictions about a way of representing the world, we can call it 'a mental model' (1996, quote from [www.cos.ufrj.br](http://www.cos.ufrj.br)) [50]. Many SMs today are already doing it. Their policies in fact, are not best practices, because no practice can be 'best' absolutely - as we have seen - but they focus on the orientations, the values, the principles that emerge in their experiences. Starting from an experienced practice is to transform action into knowledge that can be used in other situations. It is knowing how to value the knowledge that comes from one's work. The majority of SMs have entered the world of management exclusively through the door of teaching. They are vulnerable because they took on the role without an established management background, without a specific professional affiliation. Moreover, they take on the role accepting the risk of having to abandon safe but obsolete models in which they feel cramped, and search for models and paradigms that suit them and their school.

The needed management is: not only be specialists in one's own competences but also to see how to make one's work fit into the context, the possibilities of interaction with the context, and to see how to fit one's work into the complexity of one's own community. This is what Hannah Arendt - in the book *Vita Activa* - writes about the levels of growth of human labour [51]. From the animal laborans (the compulsory, repetitive work necessary for survival) to the homo faber, the craftsman or professional who emancipates himself through his work but remains locked in that professionalism. The highest level of work is political acting, that is, going beyond the confines of trade or profession, transferring the awareness of one's own capacity to affect reality, on the most open terrain, political and social. This shift to political acting widens the space of freedom.

Good managers know the importance of management. Traditionally, leadership in decision-making has largely been seen as centred on the SM. However, with the onset of the information age, schools have restructured or are in the process of restructuring so that SM and teachers work together to address the leadership demands of today and prepare for those of tomorrow. In a management system where teachers and administrators work collaboratively to define educational policy and the agenda for the school, the responsibility that once rested on the shoulders of the SM is now distributed across the group. The SM's vote in the decision-making process carries the same weight as the teachers and therefore could be overridden by other members of the college on any number of decisions. This type of management has developed a new understanding and appreciation for the SM's role in the smooth running of the school. The usual duties of the SM remain unchanged; however, as

a result of the shared decision-making process, the SM's role regarding the educational agenda has changed. Since the educational agenda is determined by consensus, the SM must now facilitate the building of that consensus. This involves seeking out and providing sources of information, acting as a clearinghouse so that collegial bodies can work from a relational systemic perspective, assisting staff members in providing accountability, and encouraging staff development and experimentation. Although these are also traditional SM tasks, the difference is that the SM may now work more indirectly. Shared decision-making may imply that the headmaster is losing authority by consciously using delegation and providing and receiving continuous 'reflective' feedback. On the contrary, since the SM's sphere of communication is much wider, influence is actually increased. After all, when a SM makes a decision alone, he or she is also only attempting to implement it. In contrast, when the group makes the decision, the group is ready to get to work.

### Inclusive managers

Schools have changed a lot in the last two decades. One of the main differences is the cultural diversity in our schools today. The student population in most urban schools comes from all over the world, from Asia, the West Indies, South America, Eastern Europe and Africa. This diversity challenges SM to find ways to establish and maintain good relationships with these different groups and to honour this diversity in both the content and conduct of their schooling. James Ryan (1999) [52] describes a number of strategies that headmasters can use to overcome these challenges in his article 'Leadership and Diversity'.

Establishing meaningful relationships with different members of the school community involves a huge effort on the part of the SM. Accessibility is crucial. This implies making it a priority to talk to people, to convey the message that you are there for them. The SM should pre-occupy himself with communication in the different languages, especially of key documents such as the PTOF, the school regulations, the co-responsibility pact and all urgent notices, both on the school website and in some printed summaries. Posting welcome signs in the appropriate languages is a sign of care and respect as well as a powerful intercultural education action; as is sending out welcome newsletters; taking the initiative to talk to members of different communities; and leaving the office and school often to attend meetings of community organisations. It is necessary for SMs to take the initiative to approach others.

With the constant, diverse and complex demands placed on schools today, SMs often find themselves hearing what people say, but not really listening. If SMs make an effort to really listen, people will soon realise when they are being listened to, the real complexities and difficulties involved in running a school, and will start to participate in greater numbers than ever before. SMs can improve listening by training themselves to do so, by generating dialogue spaces, by making the interactive situation as comfortable

as possible, by providing translation services where appropriate, by comparing the experience of colleagues and other leaders with their own, by asking questions and avoiding interrupting those who are speaking, and by respecting the turn to speak.

Furthermore, in an effort to establish and maintain good relations with school communities, it is important to get to know the groups that make up the community. SMs can learn a lot simply by walking around the school, using various forms of questionnaires or inviting parents and other community members to share their thoughts during formal, and much more often informal, meetings organised by the school. Another important aspect of the relationship between SMs and school communities is that SMs are expected to make students, teachers and parents aware of the realities of their respective school communities, offering reasonable hopes of educational success for each and every one. This can be done by organising information meetings, orientation events, newsletters, better organising the school website, conscientiously managing the social media in which the school participates, school newspapers, setting fixed appointments on the web where students, families, stakeholders meet, involving them directly in these initiatives. They can also organise both informal and formal meetings, or involve parents to assist and support them in educational processes and not only in school activities: the transformative dialogic SM promotes meetings and activities in which teachers, students and families come together to co-construct concrete paths useful to the community.

Providing inclusive education is just another of the many challenges that SMs face today. Leaders who strive to be transformational leaders are much better prepared to meet this challenge and are more likely to see the results of their efforts more quickly.

### Transformational leadership: towards a new organisational model

Is it possible to create organisations that are at least free from the unnecessary suffering that is increasingly present in the workplace? Free from bureaucracy and internal conflicts; free from stress and burnout; free from resignation, resentment, apathy and bitterness; free from a lack of transparency, backbiting, talking behind each other's backs, free from the hunt for the guilty, of those who talk a lot compared to those who work hard? Is it possible to regenerate organisations, to design a new model, to replace the paradigm of fear and control with one based on awareness, dialogue, responsibility, commitment, collaboration and alliance? Is it possible to create schools that are rich in soul, values and feelings, where talents, of each and every one, can flourish and vocations can be respected and valued? From many you will hear that it will never change, that men are made that way, that it is only utopia. I think of utopia, I think of what it has done for humanity and, perhaps, how much we lack a strong utopia today... I think of utopia as Galeano (1971) [53] thinks of it: "Utopia is on the horizon. I take two steps closer; she takes two steps further away. I walk another

ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I will never reach it. So, what is the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking".

To the extent that this article is being written and to the extent that you are reading it we rediscover ourselves, knowing that reality is not just what we thought it was, polarised, but much more complex. The reason? Humanity is complex and always diverse. Many still think of diversity as a threat, whereas the best proof that the diversity of reality deserves to be designed in all its possibilities for development and change is precisely in the capacity for surprise that reality offers us in any field and always. Not only change is always possible, but also change is already here right now: right now many schools, many organisations are already changing, without proclamations, without dedicated resources, without particular reforms, but rather by working with what is there as it is, making the most of the immense wealth of resources offered by the managers, the teachers, the students, their families and the entire educating community. Human creativity knows no bounds, and innovations sometimes appear suddenly, like a karst river, coming out of nowhere.

Observing and living in school organisations, discovering their different 'choreographies', some answers with respect to organisational change have unexpectedly emerged from the past, not by looking forward but by exploring its history. As stable and unchanging as the school may seem from the outside, it has actually reinvented itself several times throughout history, headmasters, teachers and non-teachers repeatedly have changed the way they work together to perform tasks, improve results, cope with the demands of increased complexity, each time co-creating new informal but present and operating organisational models.

How does humanity evolve? How do organisations evolve? [54] These questions have been the subject of reflection, research and analysis of historians, philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, neuroscientists and even contemplative mystics. Different lenses through which evolution has been observed: from those of Maslow's needs, worldviews (Gebser, among others), cognitive capacities (Piaget), values (Graves), moral development (Kohlberg, Gilligan), identity (Loevinger), spirituality (Fowler), leadership (Cook-Greuter, Kegasn, Torbert), anthropology (the dialogical turn of D. and B. Tedlock, A. Biscaldi [55]) many others. All these explorations have shared that humanity and its organisations evolve in stages. As Laloux (2021) [56] suggests: 'We are not like trees that grow continuously. We evolve through sudden transformations, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly or a tadpole becoming a frog'. All these explorations of human evolution look at a particular side of the construct, but it is the same construct. Each transition to a new stage of consciousness has ushered in a new era in human history and in the history of its organisations. With each evolutionary leap, everything has changed, including educational

systems. School organisations as we know them today are simply an expression of our current world view, of our contemporary stage of development. Can we learn to look at things differently? Because as Wayne Dyer says: "When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change". All change happens when we are able to reach a higher, or at least other, vantage point from which to see the world from a broader perspective.

As Laloux (2021) [56] again reminds us, the different phases of human and organisational awareness, placed on a timeline, offer a striking result: evolution seems to accelerate more and more, over the last 300 years organisational paradigms have undergone profound transformations. Among the different 'colour' paradigms presented by Laloux (2021) [56], it is evident that there are layers of different organisational models acting simultaneously in the same organisation. This means that not all interactions that take place on a daily basis are consistent with the dominant organisational paradigm. Indeed, not all members of the organisation may have reached a certain awareness or some members are already beyond the existing model in which the organisation as a whole recognises itself and practices. In organisations that practise dialogicality, for example, not all members practice and not on all occasions is practiced: there is always room to practise other organisational and leadership models.

The paradigms indicated by Laloux are: 'Infrared-Reactive' from 100,000 to 50,000 B.C. life in small communities and 'family-groups' of little more than a dozen people: beyond this number the paradigm collapsed due to the inability to cope with the complexity of relationships; 'Magenta-magic' paradigm about 15,000 years ago or so, in some cases even earlier: humanity moved into a stage of consciousness defined as 'magical': from small communities to tribes of a few hundred people. Cause-and-effect relationships are poorly understood and so the world becomes populated with spirits and magic with the resulting rituals, following elders and shamans. People live in the present with some reference to the past and very little projection into the future. At this stage, organisations do not yet exist. The 'Red-Impulsive Paradigm' was an important step forward for mankind, the first kingdoms and proto-empires were established, some 10,000 years ago. The first organisational forms emerged; they will stabilize in the later 'Red' paradigm. For the first time in human history, death is perceived as real and frightening, the world is ruled by the blind power of the strongest, people are quite unaware of each other's feelings and needs. The orientation is still predominantly to the present: I want it, I want it now, it is mine! This impulsiveness extends into the future with simple strategies, using power, manipulation and/or submission. With ego differentiation, then role differentiation is also possible. Even today, this type of paradigm exists in some tribes, and not only in remote tribal societies but also in suburban 'tribes'. Remember that every paradigm has good sides to its context, e.g. the "Red-Impulsive" is very suitable for hostile environments: war zones, failed states, prisons, ghetto neighbourhoods, mafias; the evolution of the "Red-Impul-

sive" paradigm is actualised and modernised in the "Red" paradigm where technology, information technology, the most sophisticated weapons allow the continuous exercise of power in interpersonal relations which are the real glue of the "Red" paradigm. The pack of wolves gives the idea. In general, there is no formal hierarchy and no defined roles and titles, apart from the leader. Red' organisations do not grow too large, rarely managing to control people who are separated from the boss more than three to four informal hierarchical levels. Red' organisations are inherently fragile due to the impulsive nature of people's way of operating, focused on the present and therefore weak in planning and strategizing. They are therefore suited to chaotic environments, failed organisations, ... but are poorly and ill-equipped to achieve complex results in stable environments where planning and strategy are possible.

Many 'Red' organisations are still present today, and not only in criminal circles but also in institutions and companies.

The paradigm still dominant in Italian schools today is what Laloux (2021) [56] calls 'amber'. The characteristics of this paradigm: 'generic' medium- and long-term planning and the creation of stable structures. One of the reasons why 'Ambrato' organisations survive for centuries is that processes no longer depend on a single person; critical knowledge is embedded in the organisation and can be passed on through a chain of command - other institutions e.g. Regional School Offices - and generations. Each person can be replaced by another who plays the same role in the process. Even the head - manager - is replaceable, in an order and manner of succession. In this type of organisation, much effort is put into maintaining order and predictability; change is viewed with suspicion. These organisations are exceptionally well suited to stable contexts and plan for the future on the basis of past experience.

The most frequent mantras typical of these organisations are: what worked in the past will also work in the future; nothing will change; we have always done it this way; our organisation, we are different; it cannot be done. Thinking that there is only one right way of doing things makes any change difficult: organisations resist, tend to close themselves off and are not suited to the competition brought in by complexity and constant change. This organisational paradigm confers stability of power, with formal titles, rigid pyramid-like hierarchies with little opportunity for career advancement. Mankind's first global organisations - from the Catholic Church to the East India Company - were built on this model. Planning and execution are strictly separated: thinking is the prerogative of the top level (the ministry), action of the bottom level, in our case the managers and teachers. Decisions made at the top are transferred down through successive stages of command. Usually a set of rules is defined and someone on the staff is given the task of ensuring compliance with the rules and handing out disciplinary measures and punishments for those caught in the wrong. The view of the 'lower' part of the organisation from the 'higher' part is that, for instance, managers are not able to make decisions, teach-

ers are incapable, unprepared, in need of guidance. Participative management seems unfeasible from this perspective. In addition, information is shared on an as-needed basis. People are effectively interchangeable resources; individual talent is neither identified nor developed. Obviously, this model, seen through today's eyes, appears very limiting, but when looked at through the eyes of history, it is evident what a great improvement over previous models based on the power of a few and complete uncertainty. The order and predictability of this model makes people feel secure, safe from danger and harassment. Just follow the rules. From the metaphor of the wolf pack, we move on to that of the army. In fact, military language is still in use in our schools today: classes, roll call, rows, the arrangement of desks and the use of space and time, etc. People operating from this stage of evolution identify with their role, with their particular place in the organisation, internalise behaviours that are expected of people of the same rank and operational context. The price of stability is to wear a mask, to learn to distance oneself from one's unique nature, one's personal desires, needs and feelings, in order to embrace a socially acceptable self. This model has strongly affected the processes and modes of recruitment, initial and continuous training processes and career development. Recruitment procedures can thus ignore the most qualified and promote the person who seems to possess the right criteria and/or can answer the questions as expected by the organisation's askers.

School organisation is moving to other organisational paradigms. Overcoming a paradigm defined as "Orange-Results" which was and is a great temptation. This paradigm has overtaken the 'Amber' model through three further advances: innovation, accountability, meritocracy. The leaders of this model see innovation as an opportunity and no longer as a threat. They move from a command-and-control style, based on fear, to planning, monitoring and, above all, being able to recognise, value and make the best use of the organisation's collective intelligence. Multiple parts of the organisation are given room for action, accompanied by empowerment and confidence to think and execute, with management by objectives. In this paradigm, leadership is not interested in how results are achieved, the important thing is to achieve them. In short, where 'Amber' organisations stop at the stick, 'Orange' organisations add the carrot. In terms of greater freedom and creativity, progress is real, and even if the climate and interpersonal relationships are often negative these are compensated for by the achievement of results, if they come. Often the ego of leaders thwarts the process and intentions inherent in the orange paradigm. For example, inherent in this paradigm is the way that decisions are made more and more bottom up in order to increase innovation and motivation, but the fear of leaders losing control and thus questioning their ego, inhibits the leaders' ability to trust the process. Hence, leaders concentrate decision-making in their own hands, decisions that would be taken more skilfully by people further down the hierarchical pyramid, e.g. teachers versus the ministry. So instead of engaging in open dialogues about what is feasible and what is not, people communicate through emails, excel sheets, electronic logs,

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questionnaires, test analyses, with fictitious predictions driven by fear of not achieving results, not finishing programmes, not being up to scratch, and so on.

As far as meritocracy is concerned, the school has never moved: same salary for all, with the sole exception of seniority, no possibility of a teaching career, recruitment on the basis of forms competition that are obsolete, no continuous training.

Meanwhile, in other organisations, meritocracy has helped generate enormous progress in social equity, at least in principle the possibility of choosing the job that best matches one's talents and aspirations, the possibility to manage one's career responsibly. Although, the poorly managed and practised meritocracy has brought back hierarchies, status symbols, wearing masks in order to compete, anaesthetising relationships.

I do not believe that the school can recognise itself in this model whose shadows are materialistic obsession, the prevalence of results over relationships, the increase in social inequalities, and the loss of a sense of community; said so, I still recognise the importance of the advances of the 'Orange' model, especially with regard to innovation and accountability.

While we find the next two paradigms called 'Green-Pluralistic' and 'Teal-evolutionary' very interesting for educational institutions, both of them fit with the dialogical approach and transformational leadership, although in the case of 'Teal' we enter right into the future of organisations.

The Green-Pluralist has a high sensitivity to people's emotions and feelings. It insists on equal listening and respect for different points of view. It seeks honesty, equality, harmony, community, cooperation, consensus and social justice. The manner in which it operates tends towards belonging, and encourages the development of close and harmonious bonds between all. The whole set-up of hierarchies, roles, social classes, institutional dogmas, and other structures crumble away and at the same time individuals can break free from the prison of conventional roles. This was the process carried out by a few since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who began by promoting rights, abolition of slavery, women's freedom, separation of church and state, religious freedom, democracy.

In this perspective, people operate by placing the highest value on relationships, which are considered more important than results. The Green-Pluralist paradigm believes in bottom-up processes and service leadership. Its position is generous, empathetic and attentive to others. It insists that in light of the continuing inequality, poverty and discrimination in the world, there must be more to life than a self-centred pursuit of career and success. Of course, this tolerant and open attitude is rarely reciprocated by the 'Red' paradigm's self-centredness, 'Amber' certainty and 'Orange' disdain for 'Green' idealism. In fact, the 'Green' paradigm's

relationship with rules is ambiguous and conflicting: rules always end up appearing arbitrary and unjust, but letting go of all rules proves impractical and opens up the possibility of abuse. Green' is a powerful paradigm for toppling old structures, but it often proves ineffective in formulating practical alternatives. The 'Green' perspective is uncomfortable with power and hierarchies. There were some radical experiments in this sense from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in the cooperative movement in response to the inequalities brought about by the industrial revolution; in the counter-cultural communes of the 1960s. These extreme egalitarian experiences were not successful over time and on a large scale. Being able to bring consensus in large groups of people is inherently difficult. One remembers the gruelling sessions that led to deadlock, while under the table power games resumed to try and move things along: one cannot pretend that power does not exist. However, the 'Green' paradigm has contributed three new twists.

### The first: Empowerment.

A decisive push towards decentralization of decision-making through a good dose of empowerment: top and middle management are asked to truly share power and relinquish other forms of control. The organizations that have succeeded in making this paradigm work have made it very clear what kind of leadership is required. Green' leaders should not just be cold problem solvers, they should be 'servant' leaders by listening to their employees, developing empowerment, motivating them, making them grow. In 'Green' organizations, a lot of time and effort is invested so that people can become service leaders.

### The second turning point: value-driven culture.

A strong, shared culture is the glue that holds such organizations together. Frontline employees are trusted to make the right decision, guided by a number of shared values, rather than a big book of rules and policies. In 'green' organisations, leadership lives the shared values authentically and so one encounters cultures of incredible vitality where employees feel recognised and empowered to contribute. Research (John Kotter, James Heskett, 1992 [57]; Raj Sjsodia, Jagh Slheth and David B. Wolfe, 2007) [58] also seems to show that value-driven organisations can develop far better performance than their competitors. While in 'Orange' organisations strategy and execution rule, in 'Green' organisations organisational culture is the most important factor.

### The third turning point: Multi-stakeholder perspective.

While the 'Orange' paradigm is based on a view centred on the share-holder (i.e., the majority shareholder; in schools the ministry), 'Green' organisations argue instead that there should be no hierarchy between stakeholders. The organisation has a broad responsibility, not only with respect to investors. This responsibility concerns everyone, and for the school: leaders, teachers, ATA staff, students, families, other agencies and institutions, the community, suppliers, the environment. The role of leadership is to listen to and satisfy every stakeholder equally. The publication of the Social Re-

sponsibility Report and Community Covenants moves in this direction. This report is not simply a document, but an organisational process. It is a school's management system through which the school head and governing bodies decide and commit themselves to creating and managing a lasting relationship with their stakeholders. The 'multi-stakeholder' perspective, even if initially laborious and costly, as well as having a great affinity with the inclusion of the social network envisaged in one of the seven principles of dialogic practices, may, once it is fully implemented, generate better results for each and every one. If the metaphor of the 'Orange' paradigm was the car, that of the 'Green' paradigm is the family, the village.

But beware 'there is nothing inherently better about being at a higher developmental stage, in fact an adolescent is no better than a toddler. However, it is still true that an adolescent is capable of doing more, because he is able to think more elaborately than a child. Any level of evolution is good, the question is whether that level of evolution is suitable for the task at hand (Nick Petrie) [59].

When we think that later evolutionary stages are 'better' than earlier ones, we lose our compass and end up disoriented. A more useful interpretation is that later paradigms represent 'more complex' ways of dealing with reality. Each level of evolution has its lights and shadows, its healthy and sick expressions. The modern 'Orange' paradigm, for example, has harmed the planet far more than earlier stages could have done. Another way to avoid assigning judgements to evolutionary stages is to recognise that each stage is appropriate in a specific context. Moreover, each paradigm includes and transcends the previous one. Human development is characterised by a multitude of dimensions - cognitive, emotional, moral, psychological, social, spiritual, etc. - and we do not necessarily grow in the same way in all dimensions. For example, we may have cognitively internalised the 'Orange' paradigm and run a cutting-edge business, but spiritually we are still at an 'Amber' fundamentalist Christian belief.

Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that people operating from the same stage may see the world with very different points of view, despite having certain cognitive, moral and psychological characteristics in common. Within each evolutionary stage we can develop both vertically, integrating the perspective of a later stage, and horizontally, from an originally mentally closed expression to an open one. Dialogical practices allow precisely the dialogue between different paradigms, between different stages in people working in the same organisation. In schools, this situation occurs frequently, for example teachers in the same class council who think and act from different paradigms, often unconsciously. Thanks to dialogue practices, they will be able to bring out their different points of view and, by suspending judgement, they will be able to find a space where their points of view can be accepted, listened to, compared and even changed without anything or anyone forcing them to do so.

What moves an organisation to open itself up to the next, more complex stage of consciousness? Research tells us that the stimulus towards vertical change always comes in the form of a challenge. The greater the challenge is, the stronger the motivation and intention for change. What greater challenge is there than educating the younger generation? Rethinking educational systems from the perspective of complexity? Cognitively, psychologically and morally, moving towards a new stage is a titanic undertaking. It requires the courage to let go of old certainties and to experiment with a new worldview. For a while, everything may seem uncertain and confusing. The transition may seem lonely, and sometimes along the way we may lose close relationships with parts of the organisation, but also with friends and family who are no longer able to relate to us. Growing into these new forms of consciousness is always a very personal, unique and somewhat mysterious process. It cannot be forced. No one can be made to evolve into consciousness without their will, even with the best of intentions. What can be done instead is to create an environment that fosters growth towards the next stages of consciousness. When, for example, an individual is surrounded by leaders and colleagues who already see the world from a more complex view and is in a safe enough environment where he or she can experience internal and external conflicts, the opportunities for him or her to move to a later stage of consciousness increase. In this specific case, meditation, relational mindfulness, reflective dialogues and coaching processes help a lot.

The stage from which leadership tends to view the world determines the stage from which an organisation operates. Consciously or unconsciously, leaders put in place organisational cultures, structures and procedures that make sense to them, that correspond to their way of approaching the world. This means that an organisation cannot evolve beyond the evolutionary stage of its leadership. The definition of a set of shared values and a mission statement provides a good example of this. For example, the practice of starting from values is in vogue at the moment and leaders of 'Orange' organisations increasingly feel compelled to set up a task force to develop values and a mission. But looking at values and mission to make more informed decisions only makes sense if one operates from the 'Green-Pluralistic' paradigm. "In the Orange" instead, the unit of measure for guiding decisions is success: we choose the solution that allows us to maximise revenue or profitability. In 'Orange' organisations, one may pay lip service to certain values; but then when the going gets tough, and one has to choose between profit and values, it is easy to predict that leaders will always choose the former. The leader's push towards a stage of consciousness has two directions: a push 'back' from later stages (rendering the latter ineffective as in the previous example), or a strong push 'forward'. The structures, procedures and culture that leaders put in place can help employees to adopt behaviours belonging to more complex paradigms, which individuals as individuals have not yet fully integrated. For example, receiving feedback twice a year, such as 360° from both leaders and employees, to assess how well

empowerment, values, etc. are being worked on; or the request that every 6 months leaders sit down with their team to see how well the organisation's values are being practised. The organisational context pushes them to operate in more complex ways than individual members would be able to do with their abilities. And it is likely that when they are ready, even those members most anchored in the old paradigm will be able to integrate themselves authentically into the new paradigm.

This is the true potential of organisations: to be able to push groups of people beyond their limits, to achieve results that they would not be able to achieve alone. This statement says even more about why teaching is a team sport and how important proper leadership is. In a time where the need for the consciousness of 'Green' and 'Teal' organisations is ever greater to begin to heal from the wounds of modernity, this discovery offers us reasonable hope.

This reasonable hope finds confirmation in the next stage in human evolution that corresponds to Maslow's level of 'self-realisation'. It has been referred to in various ways, such as authentic, integral or Teal. Maslow himself hinted at a further stage of 'transcendence' and other researchers have established with good certainty that evolution does not stop there. But all agree that the transition from 'Green' to 'Teal' is particularly important so that some, Grave and others, have used the expression 'first level' of awareness for all stages up to 'Green' and the expression 'second level' of awareness for stages from 'Teal' onwards [56].

Also in this passage, it is easy to see how dialogic practices integrated with mindfulness and systemic coaching help and facilitate the evolution of organisations.

The English term 'Teal' literally means 'tea leaf colour'. It is a colour between greenish and blue. It was decided to keep the original English word 'Teal' because the translation does not render and also because internationally it is now an established word. The transition to 'Teal-evolutionary' occurs when we learn to detach ourselves from our ego. Here again, the connection with meditative practices is extremely obvious and interconnected.

Observing our ego from a distance, we can suddenly notice how its fears, ambitions, desires often rule our lives. We can learn to minimise our need to control, to look good, to be fit. We are no longer united with our ego and do not allow its fears to reflexively control our lives. In the process we make room for listening to the wisdom of the other, deeper parts of ourselves. As Hafez says [60]: "Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I would like to see you live in better conditions". What takes the place of fear? Being able to trust in the abundance of life. Abundance and trust in the excellence of others is how to initiate the evolutionary stage 'Teal', overcoming fear and scarcity teaches us to diminish our need to control people and events.



In the 'Teal' perspective, the decision-making process shifts from external to internal parameters. One is guided by a question of profound correctness: is this decision right? Am I consistent with myself? Is my choice in line with my personal calling? Am I putting myself at the service of the world? With fewer ego-driven fears, we are able to make decisions that may seem risky, where it is unthinkable to weigh all possible outcomes, but which resonate with deep inner convictions. We develop sensitivity to situations that make us feel uncomfortable, that require us to speak up and act, even in the presence of opposition or with seemingly slim chances of success, in the name of a sense of integrity and authenticity. Recognition, success, wealth and a sense of belonging are seen as pleasurable experiences but also as tempting ego traps. How can we fail to recognise in these traits the roots of all suffering as taught in Buddhism: possession (attraction, lust, in Sanskrit 'raga'), aversion (in Sanskrit 'dosa') and ignorance (delusion, in Sanskrit 'moha') that generates attachment. Training in mindfulness (also through mindfulness) helps us to at least recognise and limit 'unnecessary suffering'. In addition, mindfulness enables us to develop the four mental states, defined in Buddhism as 'immeasurable': loving kindness (Sanskrit maitri), compassion (Sanskrit karuna), joy (Sanskrit mudita), equanimity-inclusiveness (Sanskrit upekkha) reducing suffering and live a better life worth living [61].

In contrast to previous paradigms, where recognition, success, wealth and belonging count in order to live a good life, in 'Teal' the order is reversed: one aspires to a life well lived and the consequence simply is the attainment of: recognition, love, success, wealth. In 'Teal', life is seen as a journey of personal and collective discovery towards true human nature. It is a kind of Copernican revolution in an era where it is claimed that we can become what we want if we just believe in it intensely; if we become 'Teal', instead of setting goals for our life, dictating the direction it should take, we learn to let go and listen to the life that wants to be lived through us. Those who switch to 'Teal' are very likely to start practising meditation, contemplative practices, dialogic polyphony, yoga, or simply experience nature in search of spaces of authentic stillness. But it is also possible that those who start practising dialogicity, mindfulness, find themselves working or founding a 'Teal' organisation. We can have ambition not being ambitious, have power not using power. Growing into one's authentic nature and working for one's calling is the strength of people in the "Teal" stage. The "Teal" perspective, both with people and organisations, works on strengths, suspends and replaces judgement with compassion and appreciation, faces adversity with gratitude, worries become allies when one learns to anticipate them. The world of 'Teal' organisations is happy to tap into all fields of knowledge. There is information that can be gained through an analytical approach. But there is also the wisdom that can come from emotions, if one learns to investigate their meaning: why are you angry, afraid, ambitious or excited? What does this reveal about oneself or the circumstance at hand? Intuition can also be a source of wisdom. Intuition honours the complex, ambiguous, paradoxical and non-linear nature of reality;

unconsciously we see connections and patterns in ways that the rational mind could not replicate. Intuition is a 'muscle' that can be trained, just like logical thinking; when we learn to pay attention to our intuitions, to respect them, to interrogate them discovering the truth and the clues they may contain, new intuitive answers always emerge. Another turning point of 'Teal' is the ability to reason by paradoxes, overcoming the simple or-or dichotomy in favour of the more complex and-and. In this stage, a deep desire for 'wholeness' emerges, to combine the ego with the deeper part of oneself, to integrate mind, body, heart, soul, to cultivate both the feminine and masculine parts, to be complete in one's relationship with others, and to rebuild one's broken relationship with life and nature. Often the shift to 'Teal' allows one to perceive that we are all interconnected, the deep connection with the universe.

As Richard Barret says [62]: 'Organisations operate driven either by fears or by the love of the soul'.

Each organisational paradigm in the past has led to results of a magnitude not predicted by previous paradigms. It seems that the law of evolution supports the 'Teal' paradigm just as it did the previous paradigms: the more complex our vision and cognition, the more effectively we can tackle problems. This is certainly a message of reasonable hope.

The "Orange" paradigm speaks of the organisation through the metaphor of the machine, the "Green" one of the family, so some founders of "Teal" organisations also felt the need for a new metaphor. Looking at organisations as machines seems inhuman and limiting, "Teal" leaders do not want to take on the role of someone from above pulling the strings of a gear to move people below them. Even the metaphor of the family, from a 'Teal' point of view, may appear out of place. Families, as we know, do not always bring out the best aspects of their nature; very often they are even dysfunctional. In addition, the boss would represent the father and therefore the co-workers and employees would be children or otherwise minors. The 'Green' organisation insists on caring and 'serving' leadership, but from a 'Teal' perspective the leader does not want to be a father to anyone in the organisation. Thus the founders of the 'Teal' organisations use a different metaphor for the workplaces they aspire to create. The leaders speak of their organisation as a 'living organism' or a 'living system'. Indeed, in all its evolutionary wisdom, life manages ecosystems of inscrutable beauty, constantly evolving towards greater wholeness, complexity and awareness. Change in nature happens everywhere, all the time, in a self-organising impulse that comes from every cell and every organism, with no need of a central command and control giving orders or pulling levers. The metaphor opens up new horizons. Imagine what organisations could be like if we stopped designing them as crude, soulless machines. What could organisations do, and how would we feel working within them, if we treated them as living beings and let them feed off the evolutionary force of life itself?

Here, generating dialogical spaces within the organisation, generative spaces, in Japanese called 'BA', facilitates processes of awareness; moreover, this empty space allows us to reflect on interdependence of the whole, a reflection that brings us back to the concept of Zen emptiness of vacuity.

The case studies on 'Teal' organisations reveal three fundamental turning points [56]

- **Self-organisation:** Teal organisations have also found the key to operating effectively, even on a large scale, as a system based on equal relationships, without the need for either hierarchy or consensus.
- **Fullness:** organisations have always been places that encourage people to present themselves with a strictly 'professional' identity, leaving other parts of themselves outside the door. They often require us to display a masculine resolve, to show determination, strength, hiding doubts and vulnerabilities. Rationality takes over, while the emotional, intuitive and spiritual parts of ourselves often feel unwanted and out of place. Teal' organisations have developed a coherent set of practices that invite us to reclaim our inner integrity and bring all that we are into the work.

Evolutionary purpose 'Teal' organisations are seen as having a life and sense of direction of their own. Instead of trying to predict and control the future, organisation members are invited to listen and understand what the organisation wants to become, what purpose it wants to serve. As Saint-Exupery says: "As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it".

Each of these steps forward is manifested through a series of concrete everyday practices that depart - sometimes softly, sometimes radically - from traditionally accepted methods of management. One always starts with what is already there, as it is. One works with what emerges, transforms progressively, evolutionarily.

As can be seen from the brief description, this paradigm is not only very dialogical but also very suitable for the next evolution of our schools, which can easily be recognised in both the metaphor and the three turns. Nevertheless, our schools today apparently are the furthest from self-organised processes, they are often perceived as soulless 'factories', processing batches of twenty-five to thirty students per class, one year at a time. Among these students, those who adapt to the system will survive, but many, too many are abandoned to their fate. And yet there are some factors that make schools much closer than we think to being able to practise the 'Teal' paradigm: the scarce hierarchy, the headmaster, who in any case was a teacher and is little more than a 'primus inter pares', the presence of widespread collegiality, the constitutional status of educational institutions with ample autonomy, although it is only on paper for the time being, in continuous and constant innovation

and capable of sniffing out and exploring the future. This happens, albeit often unconsciously and intuitively, thanks to the presence of the students and the different generations and cultures in comparison. Schools are inclusive by necessity, and embedded, in fact, in a community. All these factors are facilitating elements for the transition of schools to the 'Teal' paradigm.

The 'Teal' paradigm is based on trust versus control, awareness, responsibility, commitment, autonomy, cooperation, alliance. The energy of trust sets the 'Teal' paradigm in motion. As M. Wheatley and M. Kellner-Rogers (1998) remind us [63]: "We have used norms and rules (...) to make ourselves safe. But there is no safety in separation (...) we only feel good when we remember that we belong to each other'.

An accomplished example of a 'Teal' school can be found in Berlin, Germany. "ESBZ" is a school for children and young people aged 7 to 12, similar to our own Comprehensive School, which opened its doors in 2007 with more than a hint of improvisation. Just over three months before the opening, the City Council had entrusted a group of 'dreamy' parents with a decrepit prefabricated building from the communist era. When the refurbished school began operating there were only sixteen students enrolled. A few months later, in the middle of the year, another thirty students joined, mostly problematic children with integration difficulties who had been expelled from other schools. Not an encouraging start! After a couple of years the school had 500 students and today it attracts hundreds of headmasters, teachers, educators from all over the country to study the ESBZ method. In Italy, too, there are several schools that are moving towards the 'Teal' transformation, albeit within the limits imposed by the system. Many of these schools have formed the 'Dialogue Schobols Network'.

The network will focus its attention, efforts and energies on building the educational alliance between school-students-families-territory as an opportunity of Well-Being for each and every one. Re-generating the educational alliance as a hope for the future. Building a new alliance, with the direct participation of pupils and families, may form the basis for a progressive improvement in intergenerational relations and, above all, may enable us to face together the epochal challenges that the 21<sup>st</sup> century places before us [64]. Moreover, we must equip ourselves to respond to the increasingly urgent ecological needs of the planet. Another challenge we are facing is the educational emergency, and therefore the search for new paradigms for building 'meaningful communities'. In the construction of this 'new alliance', one element to consider is the formidable generational leap underway. In fact, as of 2018, for the first time, all children entering school belong to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and thus fully belong to the digital culture. This means that the analogue culture generations of mothers, fathers and teachers, find themselves in a great educational, communicative, value impasse. A true anthropological transformation. Today we have no idea what the world will be like in 2050. We don't know what

women and men will do to make a living, we don't know how institutions or bureaucracies will function, we don't know what culture and customs will guide relationships. It is very likely that people will live much longer than they do today, and the human body itself could become the subject of an unprecedented revolution thanks to bioengineering and brain-computer interfaces. So much of what we teach kids today by 2030 may already be completely irrelevant, obsolete. Many of our students experience this feeling, albeit mostly unconsciously, and often already manifest it. What is the meaning of their relationship with adults? What is the meaning of what they are called upon to learn? What is the meaning of their being at school? What motivation do they have to participate in their educational process? What we do know is that, if humanity still wants to be the protagonist of its future, it will have to rely even more on the interdependence of relationships, on the possibility of generating and experiencing existential polyphonies. In such a scenario, the last thing a school should do is to pass on to its pupils those notions that would only become more information, without becoming genuine cultural nourishment. Young people need tools and critical thinking to interpret information, to distinguish in the sea of news, often 'hoaxes', found on the net, to be able to distinguish what is important from what is irrelevant, and above all to be able to orient themselves and frame what is offered by the net in a broad planetary vision. If our educational systems fail to offer the next generations an overall vision of the cosmos, the future of life will be decided by chance, or rather by algorithms, by biotechnology, the new generations will be at risk of being objects of bio-power, mute servants of technology. This is why the educational decisions that will be taken today will condition the future as never happened in previous centuries, this is why we need even more educational 'team leaders' who know how to practise dialogically a transformational leadership based on values.

## Conclusion

Transformational leadership in the school is a clear benefit for all involved. Students will benefit from attending school, but with transformational leadership the environment in and around the school will improve dramatically. SMs, teachers and administrators working together, showing mutual support and appreciation, will not only promote improved staff relations, but all this will benefit students, families and the community. A transformative structure will help teachers to become more valued members of the educational community and, in turn, provide students with a more effective education. Cooperation among staff is also a good example for students. All in all, with the use of transformational leadership, children will be better facilitated in learning in a more enjoyable way and teachers will be better able to meet the needs of each individual student. Our task is to nurture reasonable hopes, teach to be fond of the possible and the search for meaning in life.

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