

Summary

Dialogue with the pupils: the basic quality of an interculturally sensitive school

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The postmodern perspective finds that everything around us, including our own self, is an image (and not an objectively accessible reality), a construction created by an (inter)action of different socio-historical conditions, such as religious beliefs, scientific developments and dominant public discourses. However, although this view denies the existence of absolute truth and makes an objective view of reality relative, it does not imply that social constructs such as race are not very real in their influence on a society. A necessity for an intercultural approach to common living and social cohesion has therefore been globally recognised, an approach that has often been defined as an entirely new conception of the humane relationship between people. That new relationship is primarily characterised by a true dialogue between cultures and between the different. All educational factors, and schools in particular, show a significant transformational potential in this approach. A school looking after the best interest of its pupils, giving particular attention to the most vulnerable and potentially threatened, a school positively valuing differences, dialogue and exchange between cultures, is an interculturally sensitive school. This paper briefly addresses the specificities of such a school and proceeds to argue that a dialogue characterised by the acceptance of the child's opinions, views and experiences as an equal and by a demand for a re-construction of knowledge is the fundamental quality of such a school. The final section of the paper poses the question of the child as an oppressed different person and the implications of that question for education.

Keywords: interculturally sensitive school, dialogue, participation of children, child as different.