

Summary

What the question of the relationship between children's needs and children's rights means for pedagogy

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The paper focuses on the relationship between children's needs and children's rights seen from a pedagogical perspective, and aims to examine what a pedagogical approach consists of, and why it should be discussed. The starting point is provided by two discourses on children that take different approaches to understanding children's welfare and the best interest of the child – the children's needs discourse and the children's rights discourse – both present in contemporary psychology and sociology of childhood. The main idea argued in the paper is that from a pedagogical perspective it is plausible to see the relationship between needs and rights (between passivity and activity, protection and participation) through the integration of both discourses on children, as opposed to particularistic approaches focusing on either rights or needs.

The paper describes the children's needs and children's rights discourses, discusses their status in contemporary science and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and lists potential criticisms. After asserting the predominantly particularistic nature of both discourses, a pedagogical approach to the relationship between needs and rights is analysed. It is asserted that such an approach implies defining the key concepts – needs and rights – from the pedagogical perspective, and that it may be plausibly based on an integration of the two discourses. A theoretical foundation for the discourses' integration is found in several postulates of phenomenological pedagogy. Finally, the attempt to position the science of pedagogy on this issue can contribute to developing the pedagogical approach to other phenomena in childhood research, resulting in a tangible contribution to understanding childhood.

Keywords: children's needs, children's rights, the relationship between protection and participation, childhood, pedagogy of childhood, pedagogical perspective.