

INTERCULTURAL PREJUDICES AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN PORTUGUESE SCHOOL BOOKS

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In this paper we want to analyze the intercultural values included in some Portuguese school books. We will show/analyze some prejudices and misconceptions as well as good examples of excellent intercultural education practices in these manuals.

Keywords: intercultural education; prejudices; misconceptions; good examples; Portuguese school books.

The intercultural approach attempts to promote equality, understanding the diversity as something essential for a positive construction of the society. The starting point is to understand the culture as a “rational construction” invented by man who gives the perception that this is the truly “vision of the world”. This leads us to focus the work inherent in the “intercultural education” at a deeper level, trying to discover and showing how deeper the concept of “difference” is something, too, created / invented / re-constructed by man and not something “naturally given.”

The promotion of intercultural approaches must provide curricular adjustments in the classroom, taking into account the individual needs and cultural diversity. Therefore, the teacher must meet the characteristics of students, planning carefully and assuming himself as a “processor” of society.

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INTRODUCTION

This work is based on an investigation about some school course books of primary school education used in Portugal. The students, between 5 and 10 years old, work with educational materials organized by national editors that guide themselves by Ministry of Education orientations.

This work is based on two big goals: on the one hand, we intended to check the suggested samples of textbooks were following the curricular orientations; and, on the other hand, we want to analyze the intercultural present values in these very materials.

ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS:

There was a longitudinal study on “interculturality in textbooks, the 1st cycle of basic education.” This focused on a search and compilation of cases (examples) related to “intercultural education” in school textbooks and official documents of the Ministry of Education. In this analysis of school textbooks we have focused on two priority curriculum areas for school children: *Study of the environment* and *Portuguese language*. The first area was chosen because it includes a block called “Block 2- The discovery of others and of institutions”. The second was chosen because it presents texts depicting multiculturalism. After the research, we set up criteria to evaluate the examples selected in each school textbook. Upon completing this process of selection and analysis, the results were organized according to the following components: objectives of the worked areas, concepts of different criteria (homogeneity, diversity, stereotypes, prejudice, integration, exclusion, tolerance, racism and minority), together with examples of their bibliographies, images, ideas and criteria.

CONCLUSIONS – TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES:

Few of the analyzed school textbooks are really concerned about an approach which uses a true perspective of “intercultural education. We have

found in some textbooks where there are images and / or texts which include valuable intercultural aspects. However, there are examples that go against the principles of intercultural education. Some materials from various publishers have good and bad practices of intercultural education.

Some examples may contain, in an explicit way, opposite aspects to the expressed values and recommended by the official Ministry of Education documents. These last ones, not always are explicit or enriched by procedural suggestions for teachers. There are few textbooks that care about intercultural aspects and even some of those have some errors. The integration of pictures which promote intercultural approaches should be an aspect which authors and teachers should really be careful about. Apart from that programs focus on our local and national patrimony neglecting profound aspects of world multicultural diversity.

The goal of intercultural education should, on the one hand, consist of the consciousness that Multiculturalism is a factual reality. The intercultural intervention programs should be directed to all society and not just to the minorities. The culture of a society is the result of the contacts that the people establish (in an intercultural way). As educators/docents we should develop a critical attitude and not be mere vehicles of culture, i. e., as followers we insert the values that are socially imposed to us, as guaranteed, real and immutable. Thus we should be aware of the vantage of an intercultural education. This process passes by profound changes in the educational policies that will only act when teachers question themselves and are aware of the implications of a real intercultural school.

We propose that cultural diversity should be considered. We must adapt programs, curricula, activities and achieve objectives, than those that target only one standard students. In this way, the teacher's responsibility is increased. He/ she is the one who shall value cultural diversity and seek good resources to the intercultural dialogue. Some of the textbooks that we have checked prove that it is possible to rethink education and social change in order to operate in favour of human relations.

ANALYZED SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

- ANTUNES, F., LEMOS, F. (2005). *Trampolim 2 - Língua Portuguesa 2º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- DINIS, C., FERREIRA L. (2005). *Caminhos – Estudo do Meio 3º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- DINIS, C., FERREIRA, L. (2003). *Caminhos da Língua Portuguesa, 1º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- DINIS, C., LIMA, F. (1999). *A Aventura no Meio 1 - Estudo do Meio 1º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- FIGUEIREDO, C., MIRANDA A. (2000). *Novo Retintim – Estudo do Meio 3º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- LOPES, C., MIRANDA A. (2001). *Retintim 2 - Estudo do Meio 2º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- LOPES, C., MIRANDA A. (2001). *Novo Retintim 2 - Estudo do Meio 4º Ano Ensino Básico*. Porto: Porto Editora.
- MONTEIRO, A. (2005). *Estudo do Meio 1º Ano Ensino Básico*. Coleção Fio-de-Prumo. Livraria Arnado.
- MONTEIRO, A. (2002). *Estudo do Meio 2, Saber quem somos, 2º Ano Ensino Básico*. Livraria Arnado.
- MONTEIRO, J., PAIVA M. (2006). *Estudo do Meio do João, 4º Ano*. Gailviro.
- MONTEIRO, J., PAIVA, M. (2002). *As leituras do João 4º Ano*. Gailviro.
- MONTEIRO, J., PAIVA, M. *As leituras do João 4º Ano*. Gailviro.
- MONTEIRO, J., PAIVA, M. (2003). *As Leituras do João 3º Ano*. Gailviro.
- ROSA, M. C. P., *Vá de Roda - Língua Portuguesa 1º Ano Ensino Básico*. Edições Nova Gaia.