Knowledge and commitment: Challenging children's environmental perspectives

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FOCUS & INVESTIGATION QUESTION

Too often, we see children as incomplete beings unable to think about the world around them, and we assume that they lack the cognitive and social skills to exercise citizenship. Even when decisions taken directly concern them, many segments of contemporary society do not seek their "voices" in order to take into account their concerns and views. However, the children of today will need to be more creative and informed than their parents in order to help

What strategies and mechanisms for their involvement exist to ensure that they fully participate in the construction of a more sustainable world?



This work involves several types of visual and verbal d produced by children 10-12 years of age include photography, drawings, free association, th of texts and their exploitation in informa conversation

We present a critical revision of two stu

Study area:

The archipelago of the Azores is an ultraperipheral Portuguese autonomic region; it is located circa 1,800 km from Europe and 2,400 km from North America (Newfoundland). Its total area does not exceed 2,400 km2, and has less than 250,000 inhabitants, differently distributed among the nine islands. Dairy production is the main economic activity of the archipelago.

Participants:

Study A: Seventy five, 9- and 10-year-old children, coming from four schools of Tercetra Island, participated in the first study. Schools were chosen in a semi-structured fashion, in order to include two schools in urban and two schools in rural settings. The different ements (drawings, pictures, etc.) and their verbal exploration were considered together

elements (drawings, pictures, etc.) and their verbal exploration were considered organic using an industrie analysis, in the line of the Groti-ded Theory. Stato B: All the Azorean children attending the bit grade (11- and 12-year-olds), are regularly submitted to standardized Portuguese lines yet less. In 2 VT, the "PASE LINGUA PORTUGUESA 2007 included an essay doused on the children's perspectives still networkers, major problems and potentials of submiss. The types (20 shildren, the properties of the pr seven out of nine Islands, were submitted to a descriptive-interpretative d the identified problems and the scope of the proposed

RESULTS SYNTHESIS

Children do have concepts of the environment, some of them rich and substantiate, although the criteria that they use to differentiate among them are sometimes different from scientific criteria.

Children are sensitized to environmental issues, exemplifying different problems and suggesting different solutions to solve or to control these problems. If one attends to the diversity of problems that worry , it is obvious that these are multiple, including local and global issues

the idea that media contribute (a lot, albeit indirectly) to their concerning their present and their future; this te information sources. More than half of the children of study A, think that the future is going to be worse than the present, and an even larger

number is worried with a wide range of environmental problems (both studies).

Men are considered as the orchestrator of environmental problems, although a few children point to nature, as responsible for the issues

that they are worried about. Children believe in the possibility of rehabilitation of men and in their interventions on nature. They are truly benevolent in the

way they see behavioural change and their impacts in nature Children involve themselves in environmental change, proposing a wide range of solutions. Many of these solutions are not adequate to

the problems, either because they don't hold enough information or they do not understand the processes that are at their basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative to listen to the children, because if we do not understand their conceptual structures, we do not know where to act. It is from these children's own productions that we are able to understand their limitations and their strengths, helping to build "bottom up" curricula.

The quality of the information we share with children must be improved, including better explanations of the projects which are complex, expanding their horizon, and so they do not loose the rich messages concerning

It is neccessary to work on science competences and experiment them in order to better understand the causality factors affecting many environmental proble

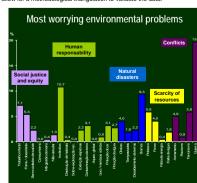
Our world is a technological world, and without understanding technology it is probably very difficult to regulate the behaviours, so a scientific spirit and logic should be promoted among children.

Children's beliefs in the change of behaviours and practices should make us reflect on all the obstacles we, grown ups, build to change. From our perspective, it is always very difficult and complicated.

We should learn from the children's beliefs that men can do good things, trying to deconstruct our own resistances, supporting practices of many years.

(and others) into practice, to help them evaluate their stratagies and to learn that change is much more dificult than they seem to anticipate

A combination of techniques is thought to be a good approach to children's perspectives and representations. Focusing on several competences it stimulates verbal and not verbal expressions, which is meant to prevent the limitation of the word as the only mean of apprehending their perspectives, to engage them in the research, and to allow for a methodological triangulation to validate the data



ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP

What is, and isn't, ENVIRONMENT, to the children?

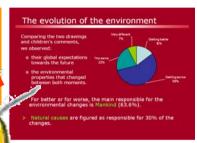
Solutions proposed to FACE environmental issues

TO BE, OR BELONG, TO NATURE

Dimension	Sub-dimension	%
Prevention	Not pollute	12.6
	Protection	9.6
	Conservation	0.2
Minimization of the problem	Reduce consumerism	29.7
	Produce alternative resources	7.9
	Treat resources	0.2
Minimization of the impacts	Separate and recycle	15.9
	Reduce garbage	5.7
	Improve infrastructures	3.4
	Clean the garbage	1.9
	Reuse materials	1.9
Knowledge	Learn more about the problems	9.0
Fruition	Enjoy environment more	0.7
	Keep contact with nature	0.2
Did not refer		0.9

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