Culture in the Mirror

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Abstract

‘Culture in the Mirror’ is a four-year (2008-2012) research program, carried out by the University of Groningen, in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (slo), and supported by the Dutch and Flemish Ministries of Education.

Building on the work of developmental psychologist Katherine Nelson and neuropsychologist Merlin Donald, as well as on semiotic theories of culture and cognition, the research aims at developing a matrix curriculum for culture education for children and adolescents from 4 to 18+ years.

Starting from a general theory of human cognition, it is argued that culture education is education in metacognition. Metacognition is reflexive cognition (or cognition about cognition) and it comprises four basic skills: self-perception, self-imagination, self-conceptualization and self-analysis. Metacognition is externalized in a variety of media, ranging from the human body, via objects and tools, and language, to a variety of graphic symbols (from rock paintings to computer screens).

It is argued that a curriculum for culture education must take into account the development, in children and adolescents, of their capacity for metacognition. Our research focuses, in part, on this development. Moreover, the theoretical framework allows us to relate, in a systematic way, various aspects of culture education, such as, for instance, arts education, media education, heritage or history education, and citizenship education.

The strength and weaknesses, and the possible practical implications of the theoretical framework and the matrix curriculum for culture education are tested in cooperation with 14 schools for primary and secondary education in the Netherlands and Flanders.
Bibliography


UNESCO & the Government of the Republic of Korea

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