

INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING: FROM POSSIBLE TO UNDELAYABLE César,
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In the past decade, the broadening of compulsory schooling in Portugal to 9 years and the inherent principles of inclusive schooling, defending a school for all – therefore, Mathematics for All – forced the educational community to look at a set of problems for which it (still) had no answers but which at the same time demanded the urgent discovery of forms of action. But the change processes are slow and not without contradictions and they only work if the different actors of the educational scenario are involved in this change process, feeling they can actively contribute towards what is happening.

Defending the principles of inclusive schooling (Ainscow, 1994, 1997; Porter, 1997; Ware, 1997) means believing in the educationability of all and in the educators' capacity to promote the full development of their pupils. It necessarily means believing that every child learns – albeit with different rhythms – that each one can develop his/her socialising skills, be able to build a life project and that the teacher must discover the best way to get him/her to achieve all this.

The case study we undertook refers to a class (8th grade) that integrates several pupils either with special educational needs or from socio-cultural minorities and whose teacher is taking part in an action-research project that has existed for seven years and studies and promotes peer work as a way of enhancing pupils' self-esteem, promoting their socio-cognitive development and their mathematical performances. We shall highlight the cases of two pupils since we feel them to be paradigmatic and clearly show how the classroom practices, working instructions and the didactic contract that is established may contribute to go from the ideals of inclusive schooling to classroom practices that really take them into account, thus contributing towards Mathematics for All and preparation for full citizenship as a reality in our schools.

References

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