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Millennials and the Problem of Time: Educational Reflections on Positive Boredom

Almost three centuries ago, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant said that “our human worth depends on the measure of our achievements” (Kant, 1997, 154). That is, the more we do, the better we are. That idea has dominated the educational discourse ever since. Our children must be occupied, otherwise, they could fall into idleness, the mother of all the vices. To be idle has also been traditionally related to the state of being bored, a situation in which one has nothing to do, to say, to be interested in or to be worried about. The idle and bored person is capable of everything due to only emptiness can be found in their inner self. That is because we are asked to prevent our children from both states. However, to be bored also means to disconnect, to be just with oneself, which is necessary for the development of an authentic personality. There is a positive boredom that we should not forget.

This paper will address the important role of boredom in our current overstimulated world. First, we will point out the educational potentialities of positive boredom. Second, we will analyze the millennials' (or digital natives) way of life and the difficulty for them of being positively bored. Finally, we will discuss some educational practices that could promote this experience among them.