EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session: Culture, identity, diversity, refugees, pluralism,

and intercultural dialogue in education

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Introduction

Globalisation, the economic crisis, poverty, and war have forced thousands of people to flee their country in search of a better and safer life. This has significantly changed the traditional composition of societies around the world and consequently the composition of the student population in most schools around the world. Undoubtedly, the culturally-pluralistic school is now a reality to which teachers and students are called upon to respond effectively by striving for social justice. For this to happen, education should strive towards interculturalism, and should cultivate the understanding of culture and cultural identity through a postmodern lens. Moreover, education should provide for an active and periscopic approach by empowering students of native, refugee, and minority origin to become active agents of change for safeguarding diversity, mutual respect, and equality. Lastly, education should challenge power relations and aim at promoting social change towards social justice.

The notions of culture and cultural identity in postmodernity

In the era of postmodernity, we should not focus on a normative concept of culture that focuses on cultural essentialism and civic integration (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). Postmodern theorisations disregard definitions of culture as being attributed and attached to ethnic, national, or geographical. On the contrary, they point out the dynamic nature of cultures as unstable mixtures of both sameness and otherness (Zabata-Barrero, 2017). Keil, Syring and Weiss (2017: 246) explain that 'if one tends more to a postmodern context, it is important to ensure in school development that persons are not assigned to groups, as this has the potential to be stereotyping or stigmatising'. In this context, the notion of culture is neither fixed or stable or uncontested across time, place, socio-economic and political settings (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016).

Beyond the notion of culture, we should also pay attention to the notion of cultural identity. Brah (1996) defines identity as a process that allows for multiplicity and contradiction between shifting identities. Nevertheless, he contends that identity is 'that very process by which multiplicity, contradiction, and instability of subjectivity is signified as having coherence, continuity, and stability, as having a core...that at any given moment

is enunciated as the "I"' (ibid: 124). Thereafter Brah suggests that individuals could potentially perceive their multiple identities as cohesive and feel strongly about them.

Drawing upon the notion of culture as defined in postmodernity, we should highlight the hybrid character of cultural identity. Cultural boundaries alter and overlap to create a third space, within which people of native, minority, or refugee origin develop multiple or hybrid identities (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). Bhabha (1995) defines hybrid identities as 'mixed identities', which derive from the interrelationship between diasporic or ethnic affiliations and political identities, such as being European. The multidimensionality and multiplicity of identities reflect the shifting nature of society. As society shifts, identities are not fixed, stable, or of binary nature (i.e. Black or White) but are negotiated and renegotiated in a process of cultural syncretism. Faas (2007a; 2007b) argues that migrants and refugees and refugees do not have single identities but employ ethno-national, ethno-local and national-European identities. Thus he urges theorists and researchers to reconceptualise their understanding of identity formation in order to acknowledge the interconnections between ethnic and political citizenship identities.

The notion of interculturalism in postmodernity

The notion of authentic intercuturalism emphasises empathy, interaction, cultural exchange, and cultural hybridity. Authentic interculturalism is not just about promoting a human-rights approach in education, while leaving justice as a normative conception in the background (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). On the other hand, Rios and Markus (2011) argues that interculturalism is a human right, by itself. Therefore, the focus of interculturalism is social justice that stems from socially and educationally transformative activism (Faas, 2010). Thus, it is not enough to promote the 'overly-simplistic approach (can't we all just get along?) approach', but it should transcend to 'a systemic approach that insists first and foremost on the construction of an equitable and just world' (Gorski, 2009: 88). According to Gorksi (2008: 522) the first step toward authentic interculturalism is 'undertaking a series of shifts in consciousness that acknowledge sociopolitical context, raise questions regarding control and power and inform rather differing to, shifts in practice'.

In this context, authentic interculturalism should aim at the deconstruction of power, privilege, and subjugation. Consequently, authentic interculturalism, rather than concentrating on cultures and histories, should turn its focus on power analyses emerging from critical pedagogy. Arguably, it envisages enabling *all* people to play a fully participatory role in society, by substantiating active citizenship as a contributing factor to intercultural education (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). It thus aims at familiarising

people with the principles of democracy, mutual-understanding, and authentic interest in understanding of other cultures, humanitarian accountability of self and others and concern for marginalised groups within and beyond society (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016).

In conclusion, in the era of postmodernity, we should set out to achieve the metatheorising of interculturalism in education. According to Bleszynska (2008), this metatheorising takes places across three levels: (1) the macro-social/global; (2) mezzo-social/national; and (3) micro-social/individual levels. At the macro-level, authentic interculturalism should cultivate people's awareness of cultural multiplicity and transnationalism in the global society. At the same time, it should promote human rights and solidarity. At the mezzo-level, interculturalism should fight against social injustices and the 'reconstruction of social-bonds and social capital in the context of culturally heterogeneous groupings' (p. 538). Lastly, at the micro-level, interculturalism should combat xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and prejudice (which are barriers to intercultural contact), and develop intercultural competence.

The principles underlying interculturalism

The most important principles underlying interculturalism according to Helmut Essinger, are empathy, solidarity, mutual respect, and combating nationalistic thinking. To begin with, empathy is the capacity to understand what another person is experiencing from within the other person's frame of reference; for example, the capacity to place oneself in another's shoes. The essence of empathic interaction entails the genuine understanding of other people's feelings. This principle is essential for interculturalism because it is not possible to generate cross-cultural understanding and appreciation without generating or developing empathy (Bellet & Michael, 1991).

Secondly, solidarity points out to our strength as people through our diversity. A prerequisite of solidarity is building a collective consciousness to combat social injustice. Solidarity includes a humanitarian approach that surpasses the boundaries of cultural (or other) groups or countries. Solidarity also highlights inclusion. Inclusion entails involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognised. An inclusive society promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016).

Thirdly, mutual respect refers to our societal and individual respect to cultural diversity with openness to diverse cultures. Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs. In diversity we see part of our strength, we have to use it to empower the methodology and foment cross-cultural understanding. The principle of mutual respect has particular salience for societies that are characterised by social inequalities and injustices. Intercultural respect is envisaged by opening up ourselves to other cultures and by inviting others to open up to our culture. It should be enacted across all the levels of our social life towards any other person regardless of their cultural background.

Fourthly, combating nationalistic thinking points out the need for taking action for diversity in order to promote dialogue and communication among people by abolishing their nationalistic stereotypes and prejudices. Combating nationalistic prejudices may occur by cultivating critical thinking and the implementation of democratic principles. However, we should note that nationalism differs from patriotism. Patriotism refers to the love of our country, while nationalism refers to intolerance and hatred to the members of other national groups. Nationalism often relates to the violation of human rights, violence, and marginalisation.

EDC/HRE and Intercultural Literacy

In our modern and culturally-diverse world, EDC/HRE should inter alia aim ta enriching students' skills referring to Intercultural literacy. Intercultural literacy refers to the ability to interpret documents and artefacts from a range of cultural contexts, as well as to effectively communicate messages and interact constructively with interlocutors across different cultural contexts". (Dudeney, Hockly & Pegrum, 2014: 34). The goals of Intercultural Literacy are: (a) promote awareness of cultural multiplicity and transnationalism in the global society; (b) foster human rights and human solidarity; (c) fight against social inequalities; (d) demolish barriers to intercultural contact, such as xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and prejudice; and (e) build intercultural competence. Undeniably, intercultural literacy should be promoted through EDC/HRE to combat nationalistic thinking promoted by any kind of propaganda; combat stereotypes, prejudices, and marginalisation cultivated my undemocratic and extremist practices; cultivate students' critical thinking on democracy, social justice, and the implementation of democratic principles; and build social cohesion and solidarity.

In order to cultivate students' Intercultural Literacy through EDC/HRE we should aim at cultivating their sociological knowledge and their ability to recognise inequalities in order

to help students reflect on the media ecosystem and our roles in it. Furthermore, we should aim at developing their skills in empathy as a step toward building trust, acceptance and respect to fight stereotypes mainstreamed through undemocratic practices, extremism, populism, and propaganda. In addition, through our teaching, we should envisage challenging our students' cultural assumptions through the critical selection of information sources and the development of their evaluation skills. Last but not least, we should build their skills to recognise diverse behaviours and understand the cultural reasons behind them.

Active democratic citizenship for interculturalism

Undeniably, active democratic citizenship for interculturalism requires intercultural literacy, especially where refugees live within the communities. We should nonetheless highlight that intercultural literate citizens possess also three other intertwined traits: (a) self-governance; (a) affirmative introspection; and (c) social-architecting skills (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque & Rowe, 2008). To begin with, self-governance aims at empowering children and youth to gain mastery over their emotions. Through education, children and youth should acquire the tools to become able to manage difficult emotions that are produced by racism and stereotypes, fake news, propaganda, scapegoating and other means. In postmodernity, self-governance also helps children and 'youth reflect on

social, ideological, and affective influences in what information and news they engage with' (Alvermann, 2019). Children and youth are therefore empowered to convert unhealthy anger resulting from the detrimental consequences of racism to productive social actions. Additionally, they become able to deal effectively with socio-political change and the ambiguity that is characterising our modern times.

Secondly, affirmative introspection refers to the mastery of introspective skills, which aims at empowering children and youth to critically reflect on themselves (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque & Rowe, 2008). It is notable that by gaining insight into our personal or group (i.e. ethnic group) values, worldviews, and beliefs that influence all spheres of life (i.e. personal, political, social etc.), we are enabled to reflect on and confront biases and stereotypes produced by propaganda and populism that impact not only our own personal behaviour, but also societal stances.

Lastly, social-architecting skills are necessary for structuring synergistic and collaborative environments in our culturally-diverse societies (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque & Rowe, 2008). Education should thus aim at developing children's and youth's agency for taking informed and ethical action within a social and media driven political context'. (Alvermann,

2019). Students should be empowered to act as cultural interpreters, master conflict-resolution skills, and promote solidarity actions that support equality in human dignity.

Conclusion

The most beneficial situation brought about by interculturalism is the effort that begins with school transformation and ends in social reconstruction in order to meet everyone's needs (Grant & Sleeter, 2005). Interculturalism does not restrict its focus to school transformation but also seeks to restructure the cultural and political contexts of schooling (Burnett, 1998). It is not exclusively oriented towards refugee or minority students' academic success but has a rather broader focus on societal change through a social-justice and human-relations approach. Therefore, interculturalism becomes a wider spectrum of socially-driven and social-activist education policies. Such policies include the development of anti-bias curricula, recruitment of teachers of minority or refugee backgrounds in schools, and the development of inclusive school cultures. These policies should also focus on developing students' intercultural literacy, critical-thinking, and decision-making skills 'to prepare students to become socially active citizens' (Burnett, 1998: 4). Arguably, we should transform schools to meet the challenges of cultural diversity. This transformation should mainly aim at the creation of inclusive cultures in schools. Booth and Ainscow (2002: 8) define inclusive school cultures as the creation of 'a secure, accepting, collaborating, stimulating community, in which everyone is valued'.

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