

TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE ETHNIC MINORITY DIMENSION : TOWARDS A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Keynote Address presented at the Seventh Annual International Seminar on  
Teacher Education. Maastrich, The Netherlands - April, 9 - 15, 1987

by

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It hardly needs saying that we are inevitably becoming interdependent within a large global community. At this meeting of so many nationals from so many countries we have debated many issues and learned a great deal about a great variety of issues about teacher education. In this process we have been fortunate in being able to use a language which is gradually becoming the universal language of communication. Yet when we return to our respective countries, we are likely to be engaged in educational systems which are fairly diverse in terms of their orientation, especially in the way our different cultures manifest themselves through our different educational systems.

Every education system exists and functions in a social context which is closely linked to the social structure of a given society (Reid 1986). Such a social structure, even when it contains a number of dynamic and competing segments within it, will incorporate them within a common public culture which plays its part as the dominant culture within that society. In turn, the education system plays its part in disseminating this dominant culture and the selection of what counts as worthwhile knowledge and its transmission (Young 1971). According to Parekh (1986) 'although an education system may avow the ideals of freedom, objectivity, independent thought, universality of knowledge, intellectual curiosity and so on, in actual practice it often does little more than initiate and even indoctrinate its pupils into the dominant culture.'

The point being made above is that at varying levels of generality, our respective societies generally provide our pupils, through their schools, a fundamentally monocultural education and that, that education is a representation of the culture of the dominant group in a given society. The history for instance which is taught will focus mainly on the main achievements of the nation-state and represent a view articulated by the intellectuals of that society in a way that presents historical situations in a favourable light on the interpretation being provided. In turn, the history of other countries will be examined but their achievements will be relatively marginalised. Likewise, a focus on geography will emphasise the way in which the land has benefitted the society so that through such learning, the pupils can be made to identify strongly with the country to which they belong but embedded within it will be hidden significances in describing and shaping attitudes to other countries (Wright 1986).

If we examine some of the implications of such monocultural education, I would argue that in its worst manifestations, and there are innumerable examples of this, the pupil is presented a relatively limited breadth of knowledge and experience and is unlikely to be aroused in his/her curiosity about other societies or cultures. Other societies and cultures may not be presented to him/her in a particularly complimentary way. Consequently, the critical faculties of the pupil are not encouraged to think beyond the perspectives of his/her own culture. Other cultures cannot be viewed in any concrete and realistic way and consequently the opportunity to criticise constructively his/her own society as well as others is denied the pupil. Furthermore, pupils not positively encouraged to study societies and cultures other than the

domestic one are highly likely to be unable to develop much sympathy for them, and unable to appreciate diversity of values, life styles and especially world-views other than those provided by the monoculture. If we take this scenario to a logical progression, I would suggest that the ground work becomes laid for racist views about other cultures. I use the word 'racist' advisedly because the only yardstick available to the monocultural child is his/her own culture. The child judges and evaluates other cultures it inevitably comes across by a comparison with his/her own culture which he/she invariably places in a superior position for purposes of comparison. As Parekh (1986) suggests, some cultures will be judged as 'developed' if they resemble his/her own while others will be judged as relatively 'uncivilised' when they diverge from the one known and internalised culture. Sadly this is to be found across most societies and while one perhaps might understand the inability of a poor country to provide a broad education because of a lack of resources, it is painful to see so many children in the richer countries so ignorant, apathetic and dismissive about other countries and societies. This is especially true for the treatment of ethnic minorities in the developed countries, some of whom have lived there for decades. Not only are such ethnic minorities significantly disadvantaged in terms of work, housing, and education, they are increasingly victims of physical violence with racial overtones not only in the inner cities, but even on college/university campuses and we really must ask how this can be possible in the late 20th century in the advanced societies? But in posing such a question, I want to make it clear that we must also be very concerned about such antagonisms among groups of peoples in other societies too which includes many Third World countries.

In contrast to monocultural education, I should like to suggest that multicultural education can provide an opportunity for freedom from narrow horizons through the opportunity to examine other societies and cultures and make informed judgements and appraisals of them. It also offers the ideal of a broad and liberal education which sensitises the pupil to an increasingly pluralist world which has a multitude of beliefs and practices. A pupil's curriculum which is broadly conceived and intentionally departs from a monocultural perspective will provide the child a breadth of vision which I want to suggest is essential in the interdependent world in which we increasingly find ourselves.

The serious study of multicultural education has gained considerable momentum in some parts of the world. My own knowledge of the area is largely confined to an awareness of developments in Britain and other parts of Western Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia but I sincerely hope that I will be able to learn through contacts at this International Seminar, about such developments in other parts of the world. My central concern today is not to present a scholarly paper but to generate interest and enthusiasm for multicultural education within an international relations and global perspective.

Much of the work in the geographical areas referred to above has concentrated on the implications of the existence of distinctive ethnic minorities vis-à-vis the dominant majority and tried to explore the nature of the relationship between them. One of my aims today is also to share with you in the limited time available my understanding of the

theory and practice relating to multicultural education in these countries but also more specifically, to draw your attention to the fact that all nation-states in the world have ethnic minorities which co-exist in particular forms of economic social and political relationships with the dominant groups who wield power in such nation-states, and to say that the experience of the countries I am familiar with may have interesting parallels with countries where perhaps relatively little is emphasised about patterns of relationships between different strata. In brief, I am suggesting that all societies have dominant groups and invariably, relatively disadvantaged groups within them and that the disadvantaged groups are in all probability minority ethnic groups.

It would be appropriate now to refer at least briefly to what one understands by terms like 'multiculturalism' and 'multicultural education' and 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic groups'. According to Banks and Lynch (1986) multiculturalism and multicultural education emerged as concepts to incorporate the concerns and needs of cultural and ethnic groups. But the terms are sometimes conceptualised in ways to include a wide range of issues including ethnic, religious, language, social class and gender issues. The major difficulty to face is that the term 'multicultural' does not have a universally agreed definition. According to Modgill (1986) 'the implementation of the concept appears to depend largely upon the standpoints of individuals, whether they take assimilationist, cultural pluralist or anti-racist approaches.' My own view is that multicultural education began with a concern over the particular needs of ethnic minority children, went on to include the incorporation of a liberal and less ethnocentric education for all children and latterly the incorporation of anti-racist education in school and society. I want to take this one step further into the international community so that we can draw upon those countries where most theoretical and practical work has been undertaken in this area and make it relevant to the needs of the global community. This view is in line with the debate on the 'North South divide' (Brandt 1983), that because of economic, social and cultural interdependence, we must explore to what extent multicultural education not only requires a global dimension but demands the pursuit of its ideals beyond the boundaries of the nation-state.

The second concept relevant to this paper is that of 'ethnicity' or the 'ethnic group'. According to Lynch (1986) 'an ethnic group is a collectivity that shares a common history and culture, and common values, behaviours and other characteristics that cause members of the group to have a shared identity. A sense of peoplehood is one of the most important characteristics of an ethnic group. An ethnic group also shares economic and political interests. Cultural characteristics, rather than biological traits are the essential characteristics of an ethnic group'.

Now I have already suggested (and this may be contentious) that all societies and nation-states have ethnic minorities and that there is some kind of economic, social and political relationship between these and the dominant group. But while the developed societies are beginning to recognise this relationship and actually explore the value of diversity, many developing countries may be seriously concerned to promote cohesion and play down any possibility of such diversity. The

concern may be to attempt to achieve national unity through promoting exactly the opposite norms and values of multiculturalism, as a nation-state is still in the process of developing a national identity and sometimes fighting hard to prevent fragmentation. One must therefore recognise that the concern for ethnic identity and entitlements must perhaps have very different meaning in a nation that has already achieved a well-developed national identity than one in the process of achieving an identity. But before our colleagues from the developing countries jump to the conclusion that multiculturalism is too subversive an ideology for them, I want to put it to them that recent history might suggest that while there are in many parts of the world, ethnic minorities which are endeavouring to secede from newly founded nation-states, it is possible that the pressures for this desire to secede may actually be brought about precisely because the dominant ethnic group and culture is foisting an identity which does not grant adequate recognition to the ethnic minorities. Hence the ideas the developed world is grappling with in relation to multiculturalism may indeed provide clues to the newer countries trying to promote their new identities and preventing the very fragmentation that they may be so understandably concerned about. Clearly, the importance of heterogeneity cannot be underestimated. According to Narrol (1971), the great civilizations of the past have been characterised by heterogeneity and that today, rather than avoid heterogeneity we must discover ways of harnessing it and discovering the best ways to make it optimal. It is therefore my contention that the debate about multicultural education which has gone on to considerable length in the developed countries has every significance for the developing countries.

Triandis (1976) among others has gone on to say that with the ease of transport and communication, with the movement of peoples from one country to another and with increased economic interdependence of the world, monoculturalism and ethnocentrism is as detrimental as illiteracy. Further, that a society orienting itself to homogeneity will inevitably become static and unlikely to survive in a fast changing world.

How then can we try to promote aspects of multiculturalism and pluralism in our different countries? Clearly there cannot be a general model for all societies. Each country will inevitably develop its own variant which best relates to its specific requirements. However, there is a vast quantity of theory we can now draw upon to help us understand the dynamics involved in the process of multiculturalism.

It is clear that when in a relationship between the ethnic minority and the majority population, the minority feel they are not getting equitable treatment, then solutions are sought which are intended to restore equity (Triandis 1976). To decrease their costs in terms of exchange theory (Thibault and Kelly 1959; Homans 1974), minority group members can decide to give less of value to the majority. This can clearly take many forms including producing less, co-operating less and so on. Behaviour which the majority interprets as laziness, irresponsibility, unco-operativeness, hostility and the like might be due to efforts by the minority to reduce costs and to pursue its self interest. Violence and protest may constitute the few means of obtaining forms of satisfaction and even status.

Is the answer towards promoting integration then, to put people together more and more? The evidence from studies (Sherif 1968) suggest that such a strategy has the possibility of becoming counterproductive if not undertaken with care. Amir's studies (1969, 1976) suggest that mere contact has actually increased prejudice but this statement has to be qualified. It can be beneficial under specific conditions, for example, equal status contact is helpful, contact that receives institutional support, contact between cultural groups that are similar on dimensions other than status (such as on values) and contact under conditions of pleasurable stimulation for example camps, concerts, trips, can lead to improved attitudes. In conditions which do not have such aims and functions, promoted contact can lead to increased prejudice. This appears to be true even between people of the same skin colour and not only in black/white relations.

Triandis (1976) suggests that instead of trying to promote integration of the type highlighted by Amir (1968, 1976) we need to consider 'additive multiculturalism'. Let me explain this most interesting concept. Triandis (1976) argues that when an English Canadian learns French he adds to his capacities, but when a French Canadian learns English there is a danger of assimilation into the vast North American culture and loss of French identity. Thus whites who learn about black subjective culture and learn to appreciate the positive features of black culture become enriched in this kind of reasoning. Asking blacks to become culturally white is 'subtractive multiculturalism'. Taylor (1974) likewise argued that integration as advocated in recent years in the USA is a white idea about how blacks should become psychologically white and that this is an illustration of 'subtractive multiculturalism'. For him 'the way to reduce conflict is not for one side to lose what the other side gains, but for both sides to gain'.

There is much learning that has to be undertaken by ethnic minorities and the majority in a society to promote multiculturalism. Castanada (1974) argued that the dominant monocultural child can learn a great deal from a child from the minority culture. The mistake invariably made is that we force the minorities to adopt the monoculture simply because it may be the dominant one.

Triandis's account (1976) of how to promote additive multiculturalism using a three-pronged attack is of value in fostering good minority/majority relations. He suggests the following:

- (a) minorities must seek power through flexible, imaginative approaches. My personal orientation towards this goal is to work towards multiculturalism which gets enshrined in legislation.
- (b) to learn about another culture one must first be secure in one's own identity. The essence of additive multiculturalism is that those who have a firm identity i.e. the majority or dominant group must do the learning and they should be provided the motivation to do so.
- (c) we have to tackle the serious problem of unemployment. It has always struck me that no amount of discussion in schools which encourages pupils to work hard can be meaningful if the teacher is not aware that the employment prospects of his ethnic minority pupils are exceptionally and unfairly low.

7

In practice we know that the concepts relating to multicultural education are not integrated into much of education and many teachers view education from the archaic assimilationist perspective. Many teachers have been relatively untouched by the debate on multiculturalism that has gone on in the past decade and longer. There is also the fact highlighted by Breton (1980) that the dominant groups tend to treat the issue as merely symbolic, that the recognition of minority cultures is granted as a token of cultural tolerance.

Next I want to consider some of the criticisms of multiculturalism that have been made. There are fundamentally two categories of these and they come from the conservatives and the radicals.

The conservative reservations and critiques argue that multiculturalism militates against the basic purpose of education, namely, to initiate future citizens into a common public culture without which it cannot be held together and that it is socially divisive as it accentuates the cultural self-consciousness of the ethnic minorities and prevents their integration into the national culture. My view is that such concerns are mistaken because the argument for multicultural education does not depend on the presence of ethnic minority children per se. Multicultural education is surely desirable because it is good education for all children. Secondly, multicultural education makes current education provision, especially of the monocultural variant even better. Another important point is that the quest for multicultural education is not to deny the need for a common culture but to argue that the common culture is prevented from being too narrow, biased and acting in the interests of the dominant culture. My main argument perhaps is that multicultural education actually promotes integration in society by reducing alienation and marginalisation of some of its members.

The objections and criticisms from the radical quarter is centred on the belief (Mullard 1982) that education should work towards the elimination of injustice and racism in society and that multiculturalism cannot do this as the roots of racism are very deep and not amenable to change through what they view as 'cosmetic tinkering with the curriculum'.

Bullivant (1981) and Stone (1981) have argued that selections for the curriculum that encourage children from ethnic backgrounds to learn about their cultural heritage, languages, histories, customs, and other aspects of their life styles have very little bearing on their equality of opportunity. They argue 'that ethnic minority children are influenced by structural, social class, economic, political, and racist factors operating in the wider pluralist society, and by the control exercised by its dominant group over access to social rewards and economic resources. Stone (1981) has been highly critical of multicultural education for being part of a myth that black children are benefitting from it when the reality in her view is quite the opposite and black children are failing in the system.

Bagley (1984) has argued that 'multicultural education has become a masking ideology and a symptom for minor curriculum accommodation to the needs of some ethnic groups without beginning to address the problems of racism' in capitalist societies.

Other critics have added to this attack and argued that multicultural education leaves racism untouched, actually bolsters it further, lulls ethnic minorities into a false sense of complacency and consequently defuses black vigilance and resistance. Above all it pacifies them and co-opts them into mainstream society. Essentially many recent critics have articulated what they see as the limitations of multicultural education and press (especially in Britain) for anti-racist education.

The emphasis on anti-racist education has made relatively big strides in some parts of Britain. Anti-racist education is centrally concerned about addressing a system of unequal power in society. The view is taken that where one group of people has greater access to the power structure than other racial groups, then these other racial groups will be systematically discriminated against or treated less favourably. Thus anti-racist education focusses on the dismantling of racist structures in society through education and sees this process as one way to promote a just and fair society, but it is not without its critics (Palmer 1986).

Personally, I am persuaded by the ideology of anti-racism but have some misgivings whether the term 'anti-racist education' is entirely suitable for what is to be achieved and therefore for now, wish to see anti-racist education to be an important ingredient within multicultural education itself. Irrespective of which term we use, a long battle lies ahead to make greater racial equality a reality. If it will take time, then we as teacher educators must ensure that we are working hard at it now. Educational outcomes are not generally realisable over relatively short periods and hence the goal of multicultural education is inevitably a long term goal but we should be working very hard to make it achievable in the shortest time possible.

I come now to some of the reasons why there has not been as much progress in the field of multicultural education as many educationalists would like. Firstly, it has been difficult to operationalise an idea that is itself developing (Gundara 1986). However it has come of age and there is a very large body of theory that can now be put into practice. I would go so far as to say that 'multiculturalism' should be made an essential study-component in student work. It is essential as history, geography, literature and mathematics. Currently to train to be a teacher in England and Wales requires a candidate to have the equivalent of an 'O' level in mathematics and I feel strongly that this kind of requirement should also be made in the study of multiculturalism for future teachers.

I also feel I want to reject the view of those who believe that multicultural education should somehow 'wash over' all facets of education but will make no special and explicit provisions for it. I am convinced that those who argue for such a policy fail to understand the importance of multicultural education and inevitably put a brake on its potential for a good education (Kirp 1979).

Most of the literature on multicultural education emphasises the importance of incorporating it in pre-service and in-service education of teachers (Gay 1981, 1983; Lynch 1983). I do not disagree with this view but there is a real need to take one step back first. By this I



mean that teacher educators have not had the time nor the opportunity to learn about multicultural education themselves to any great degree. They feel ill-equipped to do the job properly and are therefore often defensive and lacking in confidence to deal positively with a sensitive issue. Therefore they need time to read extensively, exchange ideas with their peers, fully 'discover' and understand the deep significance of a multicultural education and then positively introduce it in the training college curriculum as indicated in the diagrammatic presentation, and from my personal attempts and experience, as 'social and international relations'. Such study clearly has two identifiable components to it. The first perspective 'Social' would deal with relations between the varying groups within a nation so that each ethnic group's culture is viewed positively in terms of the general cultural enrichment of the society. Underpinning it would be issues to do with equality, justice, freedom harmony and intergroup community understanding. The second, relating to 'International Relations' would deal with issues like trade and commercial links, diplomatic relations, aid, neocolonialism, customs and traditions, and forms of stratification in other societies. This second aspect relating to International Relations is also to do with the kind of activities we have been engaged in at the International Seminar. A truly wonderful international community meets like this once a year. If we can from our informed, educated and relatively privileged position value highly the benefit of promoting understanding, co-operation, learning, sharing and working with fellow professional colleagues from a variety of countries across the globe, we can also do this with our student teachers and in-service teachers. Why not organise exchange visits with parties of our students to the institutions and students of our international colleagues we have got to know so well? This kind of activity could become an integral part of a student's course. I am of course aware that such exchanges do take place in some cases but I believe it is time to make them essential experiential activity for all our students.

I would go further and argue that society has in fact charged us as teacher educators with a big responsibility towards providing a broad multicultural education to all its members. I feel that most of us have hardly recognised this responsibility but if we do not take it seriously we cannot expect others to do it for us and the inevitable consequence will be a narrow and limited education for our teachers and subsequently, to the pupils they teach. It is possible that the tensions between sections of the community which erupt from time to time are at least partly because we do not deal with 'social relations' issues with our students who in turn fail to address such issues with their pupils over the years.

Finally, I am convinced that we as teacher educators have largely failed to convince the world of Education, especially those in administrative control of the curriculum across education that policy on multicultural education has to be formulated and then implemented as a matter of urgency. Multicultural education needs that bit of clout to establish itself as a serious and worthy area of consideration, but first we have to be convinced ourselves. The time for this is now if we are to generate a better education and better understanding from a global perspective in the late twentieth century. There are many commonalities in the goals of our different educational systems but the promotion of

better understanding, greater unity, and tension reduction between peoples within nation-states and between peoples of different nations must be a central goal towards peace and harmony in a fast shrinking world. It is my view that if we start developing multicultural education using 'social relations' and 'international relations' perspectives in our respective countries, the cumulative effect must be of global benefit. As teacher educators this should be of central focus in the next few years.

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS

(Some possibilities within a British Context)

SOCIAL RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE

1.

-----STRUCTURAL FORMATION-----

Multicultural/ethnic Britain  
from origins in pre-colonial  
times

Multicultural Malaysia or Canada,  
USA, Soviet Union, or one African  
country and the historical antecedents.

2.

-----MODELS OF INTEGRATION/IDEOLOGIES-----

Assimilation, integration,  
cultural pluralism,  
anti-racism.

Melting Pot; Mosaic; Apartheid, etc.

3.

-----SOCIAL/STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS-----

Gender, class stratification,  
race/underclass and internal  
colonialism

Women in third world, caste in India,  
aboriginals in Australia, Metis/  
East Indians in Canada, one  
African country.

4.

-----EQUITY, OPPORTUNITY, DISADVANTAGE AND RESPONSES-----

Housing; education; work -  
addressing these issues.

similar comparisons

5.

-----SOCIAL PRACTICES (examples and comparisons)-----

Religious variety, marriage  
and the family/alternatives

Hinduism/Islam. The Bible Belt  
Fundamental revivals

6. -----LEGAL STRUCTURES/LAWS-----

Equality before the law  
racialised laws, stereotyping,                      Similar comparisons  
labelling and criminalised  
individuals/groups

7. -----POLITICAL, CULTURAL, COMMERCIAL LINKS-----

EEC and forms of economic,                      First and Third World links,  
social monetary and                      role of AID, IMF, World Bank, etc.  
political integration.

8. -----POWER RELATIONS-----

Location of social, economic and                      Similar comparisons  
political power, and implications

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