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Editorial

Intercultural Education

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This special issue of the journal, Educational Research for Social Change, focuses on intercultural education. More than a decade ago, Florio-Ruane contended that the "explosion of intercultural contact in our historical moment challenges us to rethink our social and psychological explanations of learning and development. ... We must teach with the insight that culture is bound up with learning" (2001, p. 28). More recently, a number of authors have grappled with the intriguing, but often elusive, concept of intercultural education and this is reflected in their publications (Aguado & Malik, 2009; Akkari, 2012; Botha, 2010; Canestrari & Marlowe, 2013; Crose, 2011; MacPherson, 2010; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012). The concept of intercultural education presents a different stance to that of multicultural education, as evidenced by Cushner (1998, p. 4) when he explained that interculturalism "implies comparisons, exchanges, cooperation, and confrontation between groups."

Interculturalism in education presents many dimensions that need to be considered when striving towards promoting cultural awareness, respect, understanding, and acceptance. Some of these dimensions deal with matters of curriculum, language, and culturally responsive pedagogy or teaching. The pivotal role of curriculum when promoting intercultural competencies was highlighted by Botha (2011, p. 22) when she said "the importance of developing and implementing strategies for infusing interculturalism into the curriculum must not be under-estimated." MacPherson (2010, p. 282) stated, "When learners from diverse backgrounds come together, the curriculum becomes an intercultural practice regardless of the intention of the teacher, school, district, or system."

Another challenge brought by cultural diversity to the teaching and learning context is that of language. Crose (2011, p. 388) identified challenges of "language barriers, differing learning styles, preconceived cultural traits, and the development of methods to effectively assess all students in a culturally diverse classroom." Language is also the vehicle for conversations and stories that can be used to create space in the curriculum to explore own and other cultures and thus to connect with each other (Nieto, 2009).

Intercultural challenges demand new ways of teaching and so the notions of culturally responsive teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy present themselves. Killen (2010, p. 31) stated that "if teachers explicitly acknowledge the legitimacy of the beliefs, languages, cultural practices and 'ways of knowing' of students from all cultural groups, they can teach in culturally responsive ways and create learning experiences that make the content meaningful for all learners." Marx and Moss (2011, p. 36) echoed this when they contended, "culturally responsive teachers must know themselves and their students as cultural

beings and understand and accept the role culture plays in learning. To be culturally responsive, pre-service teachers must first become culturally conscious and interculturally sensitive."

The contributors to this special issue have all addressed one or more of the above-mentioned challenges in intercultural education, these being of crucial importance to diversity in general and to interculturalism in particular. Sarah DesRoches explores and raises doubts about interculturalism as basis for an equitable model of civic education. She considers how important it is to not overlook issues of unequal power relations and to sufficiently consider important complexities when civic identities are formed in Québec. She argues that Québec is perpetuating social and political dynamics and discusses the omission of residential schooling from several of Québec's curricula.

Tamsin Meaney deals with another issue relevant to the school classroom when she contends that intercultural education explores the responsibility for the construction of culture by mainstream society. She examines her role in mathematics teacher education programmes in New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden, and focuses on raising students' awareness of intercultural understandings. She used various approaches to match local circumstances and to help preservice teachers reappraise the role that mathematics education has in marginalising some children's cultural backgrounds.

Lyn Webb and Paul Webb report on a study also located in a mathematics classroom, but this time in a township school in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. English, the language of teaching and learning, was not the main language of either teachers or pupils in the study therefore isiXhosa (the mother tongue of the children) was integrated into the lessons through the use of exploratory talk in order to build a community of practice. Teaching strategies that appeared to improve pupils' mathematical skills were identified and included group work, judicious questioning, implementation of second language teaching techniques, and the development of a positive classroom climate.

In her article, Casey Burkholder also looks at the matter of language in the intercultural context. The school success of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) secondary school students in Hong Kong's education system is mediated through English, and their future opportunities are mediated through both English and Cantonese. NCS students are expected to learn Cantonese to become integrated into the community. The way NCS students experience interculturalism in Hong Kong is problematised in this article and they asserted that the term NCS refers to much more than just not speaking Chinese. Evidence from the study suggests that the policy goal of making NCS students "local" is not yet penetrable to ethnic minority NCS students in Hong Kong.

Finally, Martinus van der Merwe and Tanya Bekker explore the impact that teachers' pedagogical choices could have on inclusion and exclusion in the multicultural classroom, and how these relate to culturally responsive teaching. They consider the beliefs, thinking, and dispositions of a group of teacher education students within the domain of the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, prior to the students embarking on an extended period of work-integrated learning. Findings from the research indicate that these students appeared to make pedagogical decisions and choices based on culturally responsive, profession-based, or rules-based stances.

The issue also includes a book review by Avivit Cherrington which offers some thoughts on *More and Better Teachers for Quality Education for All: Identity and Motivation, Systems and Support* edited by Jackie Kirk, Martial Dembélé, and Sandra Baxter. Although the publication does not deal directly with intercultural education, it does so indirectly because interculturalism and increased access to education are closely related. The book addresses the internationally important issue of access to Universal Primary Education, and the value of in-depth investigations of teachers' lived experiences to enhance the understanding of the

complexities and challenges in education is brought to the fore. Cherrington believes this book makes a significant contribution to current debates about quality education.

The report on the colloquium that was presented by the Intercultural Education Unit (ICEDU), Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, in August 2012, testifies to the interest in interculturalism in this country and elsewhere. Presenters at the colloquium hailed from across the globe—Kenya, Sweden, and the USA. The presentations addressed crucial issues in interculturalism: language, personal experiences in a foreign country, an Afrikaner student teacher's experiences in a farm school, and many more. They were all very well received by the audience and many lively debates ensued. The ICEDU believes that colloquiums such as this provide opportunities for participants to discover differences and, subsequently, to rise above such differences; opportunities to create new social spaces and to conceptualise the university through an intercultural lens.

This issue of Educational Research for Social Change has touched on some aspects of interculturalism in education, but much more remains to be explored in this arena. Some examples of areas that need further research are the following:

- The absence of intercultural education as described by Wekker (2009, p. 151) when she contended that race or ethnicity is ignored as "ordering mechanisms" for the curriculum and that a deficit discourse is the main mode relevant to students and academics of colour in the higher education sector in the Netherlands.
- The fact that intercultural education sometimes targets only some of the relevant people. In this regard, De Rezende (2009) highlights the need to extend the experience of an intercultural programme constructed to educate indigenous students, to non-indigenous students too.
- How to negotiate different value systems in the intercultural curriculum, as identified through research reported on by Mostafa (2006) and Rostron (2009). It seems that the closer the value systems are to each other, the easier it becomes to accommodate both (or more) systems, but when the differences are more pronounced, huge challenges emerge.

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