How to Keep Multicultural Education Alive? (Selected theoretical and practical suggestions)

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"Here was a young man struggling with his faith in a faithless world — an immigrant son from a deeply religious home thrown into a world where everything is embraced and nothing is sacred. It confirmed what I had felt deep inside: a free and open society is a threat to religious people. Their religion will be mocked — sometimes even suppressed — and this will provoke anger…

What happened last week *(the attack to Charlie Hebdo in Paris)* is not about lack of humor, or a failure to understand caricature. Nor is it about hatred of the West. It's about anger taking a wrong turn.

What makes us human and creative is our doubt. But doubt on its own can turn into anger and fundamentalism…

…the only way to conquer your anger is to understand where its roots lie. For me the freedom to doubt, to not choose sides and to feel empathy for characters and people with whom I disagree was liberating. Today I still embrace my Islamic background, but without the dogma, repression and strict adherence to ritual."

(Abdelkader Benalijan, A. From Teenage Angst to Jihad (The Anger of Europe's Young Marginalized Muslims. *New York Times.* 14. 1. 2015)

"…we often project onto others those unconscious fears from which we recoil in ourselves. Rather than acknowledge that we are deep down answerable to an alterity which unsettles us, we devise all kinds of evasion strategies. Primary amongst these is the attempt to simplify our existence by scapegoating others as 'aliens'. So doing we contrive to transmute the sacrificial alien into a monster, or into a fetish-god. But either way, we refuse to recognize the stranger before us as a singular other who responds, in turn, to the singular otherness in each of us. We refuse to acknowledge ourselves-as-others."

(Richard Kearney (2003). *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness,* p. 5)

Basic thesis:

- Multicultural/intercultural education is basically an identity question and therefore it primarily depends on a proper recognition of different cultural identities
- How to reduce evasion strategies and anger to step into the dialog with otherness of stranger is one of the »hard questions« of teacher education for multicultural education
- Among theoretical concepts I will emphasize the importance of 3R criteria of inclusive school/society (Redistribution, Recognition, Representation)
- Among didactical solutions for multicultural education I will emphasize the role of artistic images/stories as one of the best tools to reduce before mentioned evasion strategies and anger, and to support proper forms of recognition of "strange" cultural patterns

From Rawls concept of distributive justice to more sophisticated solutions:

- From 70.-ies Rawls concept of distributive justice became the main criteria of justice used also to value school systems, how they ensure just opportunities for all children/youngsters to get education and possibility for best involvement in the society
- Just opportunities with positive discrimination also became basic criteria for evaluation of results of international knowledge tests on literacy (PISA, TIMMS, PIRLS etc.)

- What remained a doubtful question especially about so called compensative programs was whether they are primarily a form of help to immigrant children for a better start in a school system or they are a form of assimilative force to socialize immigrants – not only children and youngsters, but also their parents - so called "socialization-in-reverse" (Furedi)

- In 90.-ies it became evident that all social injustices don't originate in economic opportunities, that can be best reduced by applying Rawls criteria of fair opportunities and positive discrimination; identity issues that can be obstacle for social success can not be "healed" primarily by rawlsean tools

Forms of (im)proper recognition

- European and American culture have a long tradition of scapegoating selected cultural patterns: Jewes, Afro-Americans, Gypsies, Muslims
- Evasion strategies used in this cases, can be described as improper/disrespectful/discrimination recognition patterns (Bingham):
  - Cultural domination (the request for assimilation)
  - Invisibility (situation without recognition)
  - Disrespectful recognition (selected identity characteristics are interpreted as negative according to "normalization discourses")

- Characteristics of proper recognition:
  - Affirmation of the person in dialog
  - Awareness of improper cultural forms of recognition (awareness of discrimination)
  - Mutual responsibility for proper representation of all involved in a dialog (recognition of other's agency)
- Nancy Fraser, Axel Honneth, Anna Galeotti – most important theorists of recognition as an ontological, epistemological, ethical and political question

Recognition and representation – concepts that should "upgrade" Rawls concept of redistribution (Lynch and Lodge):

„Although working-class students experience direct distributive injustices in terms of curricula, resources, etc., they also experience injustices in terms of power and status." (Lynch and Lodge (2002). *Equality and Power in Schools: Redistribution, Recognition, and Representation* p. 173)

„Our data suggest that inequality in education has at least three major generative roots: it is rooted in socio-culturally-based systems of recognition, non-recognition and misrecognition; it is rooted in all contexts where power is enacted, in the realms of decision-making and in systems of inclusion or exclusion in the exercise of power; and it is rooted in the socio-economic systems in terms of patterns of ownership, control, distribution and consumption. „ (Ibid, p. 184)

„Inequalities of *recognition* arise from status differentiations; they are primarily sociocultural and symbolic injustices. These are rooted in patterns of representation, interpretation and communication… The changes that are required to address such injustices are … about managing difference in schools in a respectful way, organizationally, pedagogically and intellectually in terms of curricula, syllabi and assessment systems. They are about the textbooks and the materials that are used to teach, the images of differences we portray, and the silences that need to be broken about demonized and marginalized differences."

(Ibid*,* p. 172)

„Political or *representational injustice* occurs when and wherever power is enacted, in the realms of decision-making, including policy-making, and in political life generally... In schools, power is a core equality problematic as it is imbricated in all social relations... Promoting equality in the exercise of power requires ... changes in the procedures for the representation of interests by all parties to the education process, so that subordinate voices can be heard and heeded. It requires the introduction of new structures for dialogue, and changes in attitudes that trivialize and disregard the political interests of the 'other'. (Ibid, pp. 172-173)

„...schooling relations are relations of dependency and interdependency that are deeply affective in character." (Ibid, p. 173)

To change the patterns of recognition and representation we must first change our emotional attitude toward the otherness of Jew, Muslim, Roma etc.

Education through art experience and its importance for multicultural education:

- "…literary imagining both inspires intense concern with the fate of characters and defines those characters as containing a rich inner life, not all of which is open to view; in the process, the reader learns to have respect for the hidden contents of that inner world, seeing its importance in defining a creature as fully human." (Nussbaum 1997, *Cultivating Humanity (A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education),* p. 90).

- Description of penetrating into the soul of a literal hero liberates the reader's stereotypical perception and enables empathy and compassion

- This dimension of imagination M. Nussbaum describes as compassionate imagination, and its value is connected with our readiness to have an empathic recognition of the social position of different, marginalized, invisible persons in a global world of differences

- On similar theoretical presupposition I have constructed thesis on education through art experience as key method of inductive educational approach

The basic structure of comprehensive inductive educational approach

- First: Children are capable of relations of love and friendship already in their first years of life (even if ethical consciousness demands complex cognitive capacities); therefore pedagogy supporting these relationships enables the child to develop *relational response-ability* and *normative agency* for prosocial activities in a most authentic way.

- The next important focus is to *develop the sense of respect* towards concrete persons or activities because personally engaged relations may also be harmful if they lead to empathic over-arousal, empathic bias, pity and paternalism.

- The third step in moral education is *to become aware of ethical principles and humanistic demands*, especially concerning human rights and ecological values, and to learn how to use them as a basis for democratic negotiation in cases of interpersonal conflicts

  (Kroflič 2011, *The Role of Artistic Experience in the Comprehensive Educational Approach*).

Art as inductive educational praxis

- artistic (empathic) sensibility enables that in the visualization of artistic object we recognize its inner truth and beauty.

„Empathizing with artistic hero or her/his act, compassion with her/his destiny, abolishing ego phantasies about us as a center of the world, reflection of events which may never happen to me, capacity to create visions about possible worlds that eliminate selfishness and injustice – all this are capacities of imagination that deepen our ethical consciousness."

(Kroflič 2007, *Arts in Contemporary Concepts of General Education (Introduction to the Thematic Discussions, p. 8)*

Selected concrete examples of using art in multicultural education

• Kindergarten Vodmat, Ljubljana

  The Tower of Differences

During the international project *European Multiple Choice Identity* children (3-5 years old) have created the tower of differences, on which they gathered information about different cultures and religions

- Perception of otherness among students of Pedagogy (Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana)
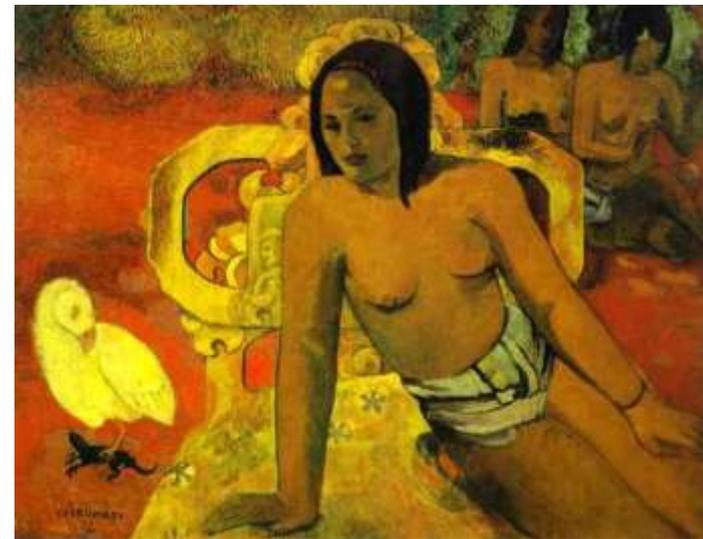
Historical Metaphors of Otherness

The Court Fool

The Lepper

The Noble Savage

- The Court Fool, The Leper, and The Noble Savage (or The Native) are three metaphors of exclusion in European tradition
- „The metaphor of *The Native* … experienced a boom not only in the form of the tourist attraction based on the suppressed myth of the noble savage and the original natural existence, but also in the attitude to people with special needs and to members of certain minority cultures (the Romany in Europe, for example). The fact that the discourse of medicine readily recognizes Romany children as children with special needs is masked by the cliché of a romantic, indigenous culture of music and dance. Even more – the true Romany musician should be, according to this illusion, incapable of reading musical scores (supposedly the basis of civilized achievement in musical art), which makes him an example of natural musicianship coming directly "from the heart"."
- (Kroflič 2006, *How to Domesticate Otherness? (Three Metaphors of Otherness in the European Cultural Tradition),* p. 6)
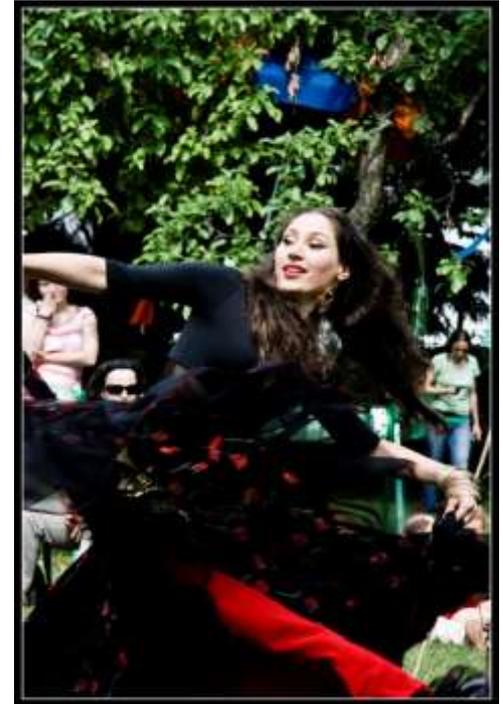
- Some suggestions to use movie as a starting point to feel and discuss our attitude toward cultural differences:

  - Untouchables - characteristics of inclusive relationship on personal level

  - Generation X - characteristics of xenophobic relationship toward Afro-Americans among American white youngsters

Selected Literature

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- All texts avaliable on: **http://www2.arnes.si/~rkrofl1/bibliografija_eng.html**