

INTERACT
WP 14, summary
Teachers as transformative intellectuals
The Danish University of Education
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Introduction

This is the third work package out of three analysing Danish teachers' experiences, understandings and expectations with regard to the intercultural dimension of citizenship education. The focus of this report is to analyse how the teachers we have interviewed (see WP 11) think and act as transformative intellectuals.

The analysis is structured according to themes that have emerged from coding the data as well as the categorization that the partner teams agreed upon, i.e.

- The teachers' construction and reproduction of knowledge
- Teaching/Learning as a transformative process
- Teachers' commitment to transform society
- Teacher Education
- Teacher's Assessment

Conceptual framework: Border Pedagogy and Multicultural Democratic Education

The approach to our data analysis is a social constructivist epistemology: We investigate how the teachers are naming their knowledge, reflections and their practice. We will focus on how the teachers think diversity theoretically and practically, how these ways of thinking influence their practice and whether and how they connect intercultural education with pedagogical reflections and reflections about democracy. Our perspective is inspired by Henri Giroux's ideas about border pedagogy and border crossings which involves the transformation of discursive structures, for example ways of thinking differences and democracy.

The discourses of the students also play an important role in the intercultural classroom. However, we cannot pursue the meaning of these discourses within the framework of this report.

We begin with a short introduction to Henry Giroux's thinking about border pedagogy. Giroux's thinking (Giroux: 1989, 1992 and 2003), is influenced both by a modernist paradigm characterized by the ideas of emancipation and by a poststructuralist paradigm (in Giroux's words "post-modern") where meaning and identity are constantly flowing. Differences and borders are central concepts in Giroux's border pedagogy. Giroux considers discursive borders to be historical and

cultural constructions based on different representations and practices which name and legitimize the knowledge and power of dominating groups and marginalize and exclude the voices and cultural capital of subordinate groups. In this way discursive differences are manifestations of knowledge and power (Foucault 1977). Giroux points out that teachers must have an understanding of how differences are constructed (among other things through exclusion and marginalization) and of how the structures of power can be changed if they are to contribute to transforming dominating discourses.

Giroux argues for border pedagogy as a critical pedagogy of differences. The (re)cognition of the discursive borders and the transformations of the ideas they represent require a critical view, a pedagogical transformative process and a focus on the students as border crossers:

According to Giroux both teachers and students must become aware of contradictions and omissions, the excluded and marginalized otherness in dominating official discourses - for example in the curriculum - and in this way become able to transform them. Critical considerations about whose knowledge and interests the curriculum represents, also helps the teachers and students to become border crossers.

The stories and narratives of the students are important in this process. Their knowledge and voices open up possibilities for new discursive territories and for mapping and naming new knowledge: i.e. remapping. Furthermore Giroux argues that the discourses of democracy and difference can be taken up as pedagogical practices through the concept of counter-memory, which is inspired by Foucault.

The concept of counter-memory also reasserts the rewriting of history through the students' narratives and voices as a pedagogical practice.

The pedagogy of difference is in addition to this a politics of differences, because transformations of discursive borders and the remapping of knowledge affects both the students' construction of identity and their construction of themselves as political subjects.

Therefore the teachers must have knowledge about how subjectivity is constructed both in a pedagogical and in a political context.

In addition to the theoretical perspectives of Giroux we have drawn on classroom based perspectives on multicultural democratic education. In the article "Building a Framework for Classroom – Based Multicultural Democratic Education: Learning From Three Skilled Teachers" A.R. Marri for instance points at various ways of making the rhetoric of critical pedagogy operational through concrete tools for working with classroom-based multicultural democratic education. Based on the results of an empirical investigation Marri stresses that critical thinking does not necessarily lead to political action. He regards the movement from critical thinking to social action and human agency as a continuum and points out that the teachers he studied did not promote political action. A point we will return to in 'Teachers' commitment to transform society' (p.10).

Furthermore we see our data through the discourse of a 'Danish democratic educational tradition' which we have in common with the Danish teachers.

The Danish democratic educational tradition is both a set of values and practices. In the curriculum for the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school the democratic values are named in “The Aims of the Folkeskole” and in the “Executive Order on the Upper – Secondary School” and are at same time part of a cross-curricular aim of all subjects. (Se: WP 3)

Democratic education in a Danish context is (as it is described by teachers and others) an educational practice which involves teaching democracy through dialogue, discussions, group work etc. and through the involvement of students in decisions concerning the class and to some extent in the teaching itself. Democracy is also part of the learning situated in the pupils’ council and in other committees at school.

The teachers’ construction and reproduction of knowledge

Curriculum

Both Giroux and Marri focus on the composition and extension of the curriculum in connection with intercultural education and border pedagogy. Marri stresses that the students must know both mainstream academic knowledge and transformative academic knowledge that: “emphasizes the content that questions and critiques the standard views accepted by dominant society” (Marri: 2005:1040)

In general the teachers we have interviewed do not see the curriculum as a representation of a hegemonic discourse. Their notion of teaching democracy is, as mentioned, quite different from the ideas of Giroux and must be seen in connection with a different conception of critical thinking in the Danish context. When we ask about the intercultural dimension of their subjects the teachers often reproduce the mapping of knowledge found in the curriculum. Intercultural issues are connected with an international perspective in for example History, with teaching the parliamentary system of EU in Civics/ Social studies and with cultural encounters understood as encounters between the “language and culture” of different countries in subjects which deal with foreign languages. In Denmark intercultural education is not a cross-curricular activity and it is not a part of the general aims of the Primary, Lower Secondary or Upper – Secondary School (Se WP 3 -5)

However, other teachers are critical of the ways subjects, culture(s), identities and democracy are conceptualized in the curriculum. Some informants stressed that the curriculum is too closely associated with a national identity in the subjects Danish, History and Religious knowledge/Religion.

Other teachers stress that the students have less to say after the curriculum reform in the gymnasium in 2005.

A few informants transform the thinking of the curriculum for example by teaching Islam in an earlier class than the curriculum prescribes.

According to Marri (2005) the curriculum can be regarded as a minimum which the teachers can extend and supplement with an intercultural perspective. In this way the national perspective, which is quite dominating in the Danish curriculum, can be supplemented with an international and an intercultural perspective. At the same time Marri stresses the necessity of working with traditional knowledge so that students can acquire power codes in the form of communicative competence,

analytical competence in connection with the media, information retrieval, knowledge of history and critical reading.

Our data do not show that the teachers have similar considerations about the composition of the curriculum. We did not ask directly which kind of knowledge and which competences the students must have to manage in society/ in a multicultural society.

The ideas that lie behind the teachers' practice and ideas which they get from practice

In the following we shall outline the ideas which typically lie behind the teachers' understanding of (intercultural) democratic education and the ideas and visions that they get from their practice.

In general the teachers regard the students' education as: "a democratization process. (...) they are future citizens".

Some teachers point to the folk high school tradition in Denmark, the humanistic ideals of formation in the renaissance and the idea of the Greek-Roman cultures as their basis of understanding democratic education.

In addition to this we shall point to the more practical concept of democracy expressed both by the teachers we have interviewed and by three Upper-Secondary School teachers and policymakers in the article "Education for Democratic Processes in Schools and Classrooms":

"A positive, conducive classroom culture is a significant factor in promoting education for democratic citizenship because, within a specific context, students' experience an atmosphere of security and trust where they can experience and practise their democratic skills" Print, Ørnstrøm and Skovgaard Nielsen: 2002: 204)

Among the ideas which teachers get from practice is the notion that it is necessary to strengthen a feeling of community.

Several teachers stress that it is their job to challenge "young people's need for self-centredness"

In general the teachers point to the fact that the acceptance of differences and diversity are fundamental democratic values.

Other ideas that the teachers get from practice concern the deficiencies/disadvantages or resources of the students. Some teachers stress that they do what they can to discover the potentials of the students -both in relation to how they can contribute to the teaching and in relation to how they can learn.

We also encounter the notion that the students (especially the bilingual students) lack knowledge in several areas: knowledge about language and society, other points of view and other ways of living than their own. But often the teachers express a desire to support the mapping of identity of the students and they reflect on the possibilities of cultural encounters and intercultural dialogue in class.

Teaching/Learning as a transformative process

In the interviews we asked whether the teachers thought they contributed to transforming the students' ideas of culture and democracy. Some of them answered hesitantly others referred to their practice.

In the thinking of Giroux it is the teacher's task to "create pedagogical conditions in which students become border crossers(...)" One way to do this is, as mentioned, to use the students' own stories and narratives to open new discursive territories and to cross or challenge the discursive borders represented by the school, the teacher or the curriculum. Giroux points out that the narratives of the students must be submitted to the same critical reading as the hegemonic official discourses. This means that the students must see the contradictions and "the otherness" which is excluded in their own and the others' way of thinking.

In our data the narratives of the students are expressed through their attitudes, knowledge and competences. The teachers do not mention that they use biographical or fictive texts produced by the students in their classes.

Many of the teachers who work in multicultural classes describe the diversity of the students as a resource and make an active use of their knowledge, competences and positions in class. When we asked them about the intercultural dimension of teaching they talked about how the bilingual students were involved and valued.

A returning strategy with the teachers is to let the students challenge each others' stereotypes. A prejudice against for example Arabs and Islam is modified by letting an Arab or Muslim student get the chance to speak, a teacher says. There is a tendency amongst the teachers to see the individual as a representative of certain attitudes, ethnic or religious groups.

The teachers in our data do not try to give voice to suppressed minorities. They have a pluralistic attitude instead. All voices must be heard. In connection with intercultural issues some teachers prefer to give the students a chance to speak and lay down guidelines/create the framework for the discussions.

Dialogue, talk, discussion and group work with respect for diversity and differences are often mentioned as transformative practices. These practices correspond to the skills and competences that Marri stresses students must acquire in connection with multicultural democratic education: discussion skills, being able to see several perspectives, to value other voices, to get on with and find solutions together with students from other groups and with other positions and being able to solve problems.

Only a few teachers call their activities intercultural education or know of the concept, when we ask about it. But our data show that many of the multicultural educational strategies which Marri proposes for the multicultural classroom are common pedagogical strategies in a Danish educational context.

Moreover the teachers point to "letting the students find out about things themselves", and about being role models for the students: they must be democratic citizens and world-citizens, and they

point to strategies which are to promote self-reflection, for example: writing an essay about the class, about the tone the students use among themselves etc. and they point to exchange classes and pen friends. A teacher mentions that she takes the students on excursions to show them places they haven't been before - for example the Danish Parliament - to widen their horizon.

The teachers also often mention that they try to create democracy in class by giving room to all voices and by using time on for example debating or solving problems in the class. In connection with this they talk about cultural encounters and about understanding 'other' cultures. The upper secondary school teachers also point to exchanges as a basis for cultural encounters and reflection on one's own culture.

The teachers work consciously with diversity and differences for instance by giving room for "a plethora of voices" (Giroux: 1989: 107). However, the interviews do not indicate that the teachers have the theoretical knowledge of how differences are constructed or how power structures can be transformed that Giroux thinks is a precondition for border pedagogy. In general they do not have a critical view of dominating discourses in the classroom or of the students' self representations, which are often left unchallenged.

The teachers do not focus on discursive borders in their work on differences. Where Giroux thinks of differences on a discursive level the Danish teachers work with differences on a practical level by using different pedagogical strategies to create democracy in the classroom. Some of their strategies are the same as the ones Marri proposes for multicultural democratic education but the data also show several strategies which promote self-reflection and transformation of knowledge and identities. In general the teachers do not point to a critical understanding or – consciousness in relation to their work with democratic education. Possibly this is due to the fact that the teachers conceive this as implied in for example the students discussions. Their conception of the word critical are, as mentioned, another than the conception we find in the thinking of Giroux .

Teachers' commitment to transform society

How do teachers motivate students to political action?

Inside a Girouxian paradigm there is, as mentioned, a clear connection between a pedagogy of differences and a politics of differences. The pedagogy of differences aims to help teachers and students to cross discursive borders by being aware of dominating discourses, of their representations, marginalizations and perspectives. However, the transformation of discursive structures is - in the thinking of Giroux - not only associated with the identity of the students in a pedagogical but also in a political perspective. Their mapping of knowledge is connected with their construction of identities as political subjects.

As mentioned before our data in general do not show evidence that the teachers work consciously with discursive formations or that they are aware of how their mapping of knowledge and their naming/conceptualization of culture and democracy affect the identity of the students. On the other hand the data do show that the teachers use several pedagogical strategies with regard to the transformation of the knowledge and attitudes of the students. Therefore we must operate with different types of action in connection with the teachers' commitment to transforming society.

Indirectly the teachers try to transform society by working with transforming pedagogical strategies and tools (see the passage *teaching/learning as a transformative process*) which influences the students' mapping of knowledge and thereby their conceptions of culture and democracy. They also try directly to transform society by engaging students in participating in the democratic institutions in their near surroundings first of all the pupils' council.

Several teachers mention that they encourage the students to participate in the committees of the school and tell them about their influence. Other teachers give pep talk to the students (especially the bilingual students) trying to motivate them to break with negative expectations/ patterns:

As mentioned above democracy in class and at school are not clearly connected with an overall pedagogical or societal perspective. When we ask the teachers, "From an overall perspective how will you describe the relation between school and society?" We typically get vague answers.

In some interviews two different conceptions of democracy are named. A dynamic concept of democracy in relation to the classroom and a more static one in relation to a broader societal perspective, where the teachers refer to a common heritage. Seen through the lenses of Marri and Giroux the intercultural and political dimensions are missing in the understanding of democratic education amongst the Danish teachers in our data and so is a consciousness about language as a representation of knowledge/ideologies and power. Democracy is not - according to Giroux - an inherited knowledge, but a historical and social construction which will continuously be rewritten.

In general there is a notion in our data that if you give the students tools to be democratic students then they will also become active democratic citizens.

We can conclude that a number of teachers have developed pedagogical strategies for democratic education in an intercultural classroom. They have a pedagogy of differences you might say, but they do not name it and it does not change their way of naming intercultural issues. This means that they do not have a politics of differences in Giroux's sense.

Teacher Education

None of the teachers we interviewed had had in-service training or further education within intercultural issues or intercultural democratic education/ citizenship education. Asked if they thought they needed further education and which kind of courses they would prefer the answers were as follows: Some teachers, especially the ones who taught at schools with a small percentage of minority children, did not think they needed further education. Other teachers said that they did need further education within this area. This group counted both teachers from so called "white" and "black" schools. And finally a group of teachers said they needed further education with respect to how intercultural democratic citizen education could be practiced within the specific subjects they teach. This last group stressed that they needed concrete tools and suggestions.

Marri points to the fact that democratic education and multicultural education are two separate perspectives in the US.. In teacher training democratic education is dealt with in the subjects pedagogy and social studies in Denmark whereas intercultural issues is an area in foreign language education.

Almost no teachers referred to teaching materials within intercultural democratic education. They take their knowledge in the field from their own experiences, typically trips abroad, as well as from the media and the internet.

Teachers' Assessment

In the Danish educational system the concept of assessment is a relatively new phenomenon. The primary and lower secondary schools are developing assessment cultures at the moment and it is customary in all parts of the school system that teachers evaluate their teaching with the students.

The frequently indirect assessment which was expressed in the interviews we have dealt with in the previous passage.

Conclusion

To sum up, the teachers bring differences and diversity in focus through different pedagogical strategies. Among other things they connect differences with "giving room for all voices" and to some extent with "dialogue", "discussion" and with using the students' "knowledge" and "competences".

It is difficult to separate "teachers' construction and reproduction of knowledge" and teaching/learning as a transformative process". In our data the knowledge of both teachers and students seems to be transformed through teaching and learning more than through reflections about the curriculum. In general teachers do not relate to how the curriculum is composed or how it could be extended. There are, however, significant exceptions.

The teachers do not focus on giving voice to minorities/empowering minorities, as it is the case within the paradigm of critical pedagogy (and in the thinking of Giroux). On the other hand many teachers want: "to make room for all voices". They connect democracy and dialogue with pluralism (our analytical concepts) and do not have a specific focus on the marginalized knowledge of certain groups. Still several teachers talk about social differences and how they try to motivate students to break with negative patterns. More teachers focus on social differences rather than ethnical differences in the classes. This also includes teachers from schools with a high percentage of minority students.

In our data the words critical and critical consciousness are not very frequent. The teachers do not have a critical view of the students' narratives but let them appear as voices among others. It is also remarkable that the concept critical consciousness in general does not play a role in the teachers' conception of democratic learning. Possibly this is due to the fact that the teachers conceive this as implied in for example the students discussions and other transforming educational strategies. The teachers to a much greater extent associate democracy with the words "tolerance", "dialogue", "community" and "participation". .

The teachers have a focus on democracy in the classes and to some extent on the intercultural aspects within this focus. Our data show that many of the multicultural educational strategies which Marri proposes for the multicultural classroom are common pedagogical strategies in a Danish educational context.

The teachers' conception of democracy in the classroom is more dynamic and fluent than their conception of democracy in society which is often understood as something we have inherited.

There is a difference between the notions of critical thinking of Giroux and Marri and the Danish educational tradition for democratic education. The teachers do not have the theoretical knowledge about how differences are constructed and how power structures can be transformed, as Giroux pleads for. The connection classroom, pedagogy and society are not distinct in our data as it is in the theoretical thinking of Henry Giroux. More teachers in our data connect "democratic education" with giving the students tools to act democratically and not with teachers' commitment to transform society. They assume that active democratic students will become active democratic citizens and they do not connect critical thinking with promoting political action. Whereas Giroux points at transformations at a discursive level, and Marri talks about social and political action the Danish teachers point at democratic action and participation in the classroom.

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