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CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

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Open your mind: Planning the dynamics of intercultural education.

Dorota Misiejuk
University of Białystok (Poland)

Multiculturalism in the contemporary world requires us to reflect upon the quality of the co-existence of values connected with different ethnic or national groups and the ways in which people and groups on the basis of their race, religion and gender are rejected or accepted. This is one of the most important current challenges facing pedagogy.

Pedagogy has one of its sources in philosophy, so philosophical assumptions and theories are the basis of this paper. Analysing school practice and many intercultural education projects suggests that generally the teaching of European and Global Citizenship means students gaining new competences, broadly those of being open. This can be understood as:

- Competence in reading and decoding symbols of cultural traditions different from ours,
- Understanding different experiences based on cultural heritage, and the resultant different interpretations of social reality.

Openness is not an innate skill; it has to be taught. Stereotypes, prejudices and biases block openness, and these are driven by culture (our/their) traditions, a social process that begins with group identity. Being open means deconstructing ones' identity, heritage and the traditional system of values of one's culture. The two opposite processes, of building a cultural identity and of being open, are significant problems in intercultural education.

Intercultural education is recognised as an inter-disciplinary process which promotes understanding, acceptance and empathy, as well as constructive harmonious relations between people of different cultural backgrounds.

This is a general definition, based on the assumption that education is not only conscious socialisation, but also a qualitatively distinct process which varies from generation to generation and depends on cultural changes, in which communicative competence is actively acquired by the subject. In this approach one of the main tasks is preparing students for dialogical interactions in society. The term dialogue has changed its meaning through the history of philosophical thought. Hegel defined dialogue as a way of learning about another person. Klages, Lersch and Kretschmer understood it as interpreting another person. Heidegger and Derrida see it as an attempt to overcome the metaphysics of subjectivity. In the 1980s it was defined as an attempt to learn about another person in order to know oneself (Tischner et al, 1990; Tatarkiewicz et al, 2005).

Trying to transfer these basic assumptions about dialogue to educational discourse leads us to consider the need for attitudes of kindness, trust and understanding the other, and these seem to be a crucial tool in constructing a dialogue. On the other hand, a dialogue

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appears less to aim at understanding the other so much as creating one's own cultural identity. Searching this (in a cultural sense) should be the result of the dialogic process we participate in. The possibility of viewing different cultures, opinions, attitudes and behaviours, appears as a source of knowledge to the world's richness, which is of value in itself. In other words, the 'openness' included in my title does not exist to understand diversity, but to strengthen one's own cultural identity by means of reflective evaluation.

Cultural identity is an extensive and ambiguous term, interpreted differently by theoretical approach, science and ideology. The most common approach to cultural identity in sociology or politics is national - a community of accepted and shared awareness. The term nation, however, changes its meaning depending on circumstances. According to Smith, the western model of a nation is constructed around the central importance of national territory or homeland, as well the sense of equality and political awareness of citizens of a particular political community (Smith, 1992). An eastern model focuses more on ethnic background and cultural bonds uniting individuals. Apart from genealogies it emphasises elements of community folklore, language, customs, religion and rituals as constituting a nation. Postmodern sociology and intercultural psychology represent another approach to cultural identity, where the subject of cultural identity is an individual under the influence of globalising world, and cultural identity is the effect of individual's conscious work, their existential challenge.

Both processes in the 'game of identity' are included in the process of intercultural education. The awareness of cultural identity inherited by an individual is a specific matrix to read/decipher the meanings of a social world – a starting point for an active search of one's place in a social world. From this point of view, updating the terms used to describe individual cultural identity is creating cultural identity by becoming aware of oneself to oneself - in other words, the interpretation of a group cultural identity in the context of the specific experiences of an individual. Including these relations in intercultural education is of basic importance to the construction of the process of education as a dialogue.

Martin Buber's philosophy (Karpowicz, 1987) may help to construct specific tasks as part of intercultural education. He held that a man himself is not a fundamental fact of existence but 'man with another man'. Buber based his assumption on Feuerbach, who was the first to formulate the dialogical rule 'a single man himself does not have inside of him the essence of a man neither as a moral creature nor a thinking one'. The essence of man is included only in the community, in the unity of one man with another – unity which is based on a real difference between me and you. Buber avoided criticising specific relations and theories, focusing on the principle of 'new thinking' to lead mankind from false alternatives for contemporary civilisation, of an individualism void of a sense of community versus a collectivism destroying individualism. His alternative was the 'simply interpersonal', to serve as the foundation of new philosophy and other humanities, and also to create visions of a new social order.

Linguists, sociologists, psychologists and others - even many philosophers – hold that a dialogue is simply a conversation. The only condition is the knowledge of commonly used words, so-called intentionality. A fundamental issue of the philosophy of dialogue arise in reflections on clashes and encounters of cultures, civilisations and religions. This

tangles questions about universalism, cultural identities, multi-cultures, ethnocentrism and transculturalism. Philosophical analysis of dialogue distinguishes three types (Kuczyński et al, 1998; Tischner, 1990).

1. 'Apparent dialogue' is to be avoided in intercultural education, or only used in the preliminary phase. It involves 'me' meeting 'you', each presenting opinions on a subject. We cannot reach a consensus in this situation. Nothing changes in either me or you. We can only read the differences in the apparent dialogue.
2. Dialogical dialogue does not aim at just finding out about other peoples' opinions, but an existential opening into another to learn about one's own metaphysical world. Panikkar calls this a myth, a superstition, our personal conviction of the world's universality. For example, a fishing rod can be perceived as a stick with a hook on a string, or as a sign of adventure. One is unaware of the exceptionality of one's interpretation until a different one is revealed: dialogue then becomes mutual, and I learn my myth through you.

Martin Buber claimed life is a continual mystery. We will never find the end we are heading for. All life will surprise us, as we cannot prepare ourselves for accidents. Only the concept of 'speech' is concrete: reality is to speak. This speech cannot be written, and is devoid of sound. One cannot entirely understand it. Speaking is itself adopting the attitude 'me – you', while discussing adopting the attitude 'me – this'. The relationships of 'me – you' and 'me – this' are not permanent, but constantly penetrate each other, changing one into the other. 'This' is a specific subjectivity of 'me': it contains the acting subject and the world he has made. The relation 'me – this' is the perception of the world around me. 'This' is an abstraction, without complete value. When I observe the world, 'this' is in the world of abstraction. 'Me' in the form 'me – this' does not have a complete philosophical sense. Fichte expressed language as the aspect of sense and being. He believed that the basic issue of language as a sign is causing cognition, which does not restrict the freedom of the person spoken with on the person speaking. The formation of language means causing cognition, as you want to evoke a cognitive attitude in me through your speaking. It is at the same time the aim of cognition, as I want to understand what was said. Mutual interaction is the condition of mankind, as this makes community. 'A mutual interaction through signs is the condition of mankind because man is not alone, he makes community. Therefore, if it is a fact that there are people, this is also a fact that there are signs; where there is a man, there are more people – they are united with each other through concepts transferred by signs. This mutual interaction is the language in a general sense, without which man cannot exist'.

3. Dialectical dialogue involves searching for truth by confiding in another. It trusts natural order, mind value and strong arguments. Such a dialogue aims at penetrating the *logos* to reach the truth hidden behind it.

Cohen says that the mind shows eternal laws in the subjective world. Its tool is logic. The mind becomes aware of itself – it discovers its identity. Rosenzweig claimed that the contrast between 'mind and word' is most apparent when philosophy is encountered as knowledge, mind and theology and as grammar of a word. In communicating we usually refer to culturally arbitrary established meanings of words or special images, sounds etc.

which carry meanings. In intercultural contact these concepts are not consistent with the principles of the logic of the other, and are thus incomprehensible and hard for someone who does not understand the cultural context. In other words, if you try to communicate with someone, you may use statements which logically do not fit the grammar of the language you are using. For instance, 'there is nobody in'. This grammar construction in the Polish language tells us that 'there is empty'. Logical division of this sentence, according to the principles of formal logic, informs us that someone 'is'. Reading Schaeffler's works, recognized as the father of the philosophy of dialogue, we see that '*philosophical mind* is always individual, and means no more than *I think*'. Schaeffler believes that human *logos* are able to go beyond this egocentric perspective and penetrate the difference.

According to Buber a 'concealed monologue' describes a situation where the subject does not have an identity. It introduces itself as an imaginary unreal character; it does not open itself in a dialogue. An example of a concealed monologue is the appointing of you by me. If one appoints someone as 'you', he or she must be himself/herself in *a priori* meaning. 'Me' may also not treat 'you' as 'this', that is as an object. But when 'you' turns into 'me', there is a monologue. We treat the partner as an aspect of ourselves. These considerations lead to contrasting concepts of dialogue and experience.

Dialogue and experience are essential concepts in considering intercultural education. Dialogue itself assumes the non-redundancy of 'me', so cultural identity remains undefined and undetermined by experience. Identity exists transcendently, because a named, specified 'identity of the other' is always untrue. Buber claims 'experience takes possession of man': individual 'me' becomes part of a spontaneous contact with all-embracing reality. The result is to reduce a difference which is building a dialogue.

The specific phenomenon of 'between' is described by Buber. He defines it as the relations of existence. It is possible only when I get into a relation with some 'other'. 'Between' is something which implies 'you' to 'me'. The category 'between' is of essential importance in intercultural education. Facing another person, something that exists between people, is a dialogue. The category 'between' allows cultural identities to function beyond the space of a strict and excluding classification on the one hand, and vagueness and lack of cultural identity on the other. Nikitorowicz refers to the phenomenon of 'between' as a central concept in creating intercultural educational programs in his book *Creating Child's Identity*:

Proposing a paradigm of 'co-existence', which assumes the possibility of mutual development in result of inner processes that are taking place, dialogue, communication, negotiation and cooperation, intercultural education restores faith in man, his inner power and sensitivity to the needs of the other. Being 'between' makes an individual accept normative functions of culture, base oneself on one's own creative abilities, make use of one's own mind and heart and their creative power.

Another concept in the philosophy of dialogue in creating intercultural education is that of 'paradistance'. This is certain processes of consciousness, relations between man and the world of 'this'. Thus we generally talk of the process of 'me' distancing from the

environment – the process of ‘me’s interpretation on an anthropological level, where ‘me’ never meets the condition of being identical with the environment but is always distinct. A transformation of paradistance into the process of contact with the world seems to be a key mechanism of the development of contemporary cultural identity.

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