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Educazione Interculturale, una Questione di Giustizia Sociale?
Intercultural Education, an Issue of Social Justice?

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OVERVIEW

- Stimulate the public and academic debate on intercultural education.
- Critically analyze intercultural paradigm as per the European documents highlighting its goals, pedagogies, tensions, and challenges.
- Drawing on critical theory and pedagogy, we take a look at how the European educational challenges are being addressed (or not) in schools.
- Re-reading the intercultural paradigm through critical the lenses of the Social Justice Education Model we advocate for a more transformative framework informed in social justice.
- Intercultural education in Italian schools: a case study.
INTERCULTURAL PARADIGM

“Multiculturalism backlash” (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010).

Interculturalism has emerged as an alternative to multicultural approach (Council of Europe, 2008; 2014a; 2014b; UNESCO, 2008; Cantle, 2012; 2016; Zapata-Barrero, 2016).

Engaging in the current debate ‘interculturalism vs multiculturalism’, the book brings to light the “political rhetoric” that fueled narratives about the “failures” multiculturalism.

It links interculturalism to neo-liberalism and policies of civic integration (Joppke, 2007; 2016) and the concept of governmentality (Dean, 1999; Ambrosini, 2016; Contini, 2017a; 2017b).
INTERCULTURAL PARADIGM

- Intercultural approach has been promoted (especially by institutional documents) as a new form of governmentality that better responds to the call for democratic governance of cultural diversity and for the promotion of social cohesion in contemporary “diverse” societies.

Foundational concepts:

- “Intercultural dialogue is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. [...] [It] contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies” (Council of Europe, 2008: 17)
Intercultural education aims to prepare students to live successfully in an increasingly diverse society by developing intercultural competence, which encompasses prejudice reduction and promotes social cohesion (Barret, 2012; 2013; Council of Europe, 2014a).
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Intercultural competence: “a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly, or together with others, to:

1. Understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself;

2. Respond [...] respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people;

3. Establish positive and constructive relationships with such people

(Council of Europe, 2014a, Developing Intercultural Competence through Education, p. 16).
A CRITIQUE

The framework is designed on micro-level with a focus on each individual student’s personal responsibility (prejudice reduction, increase understanding, augment social cohesion).

Fails to focus on systematic analysis or actions towards social change on an institutional (macro) level.


For this reason, we encourage a re-conceptualization of the framework to move towards a theory of social justice education applying critical lens.
WHY CRITICAL THEORY?

How are European educational challenges addressed/not addressed in schools?

CRITICAL THEORY

Departing from mainstream social science though its multidisciplinary perspectives and its attempts to develop a dialectical and material social theory (Kellner, 1989a), Critical Theory focuses on three major concerns:

1. Mapping injustice in education
2. Tracing those injustices to their source(s)
3. Proposing ways to address those injustices
WHY FOCUS ON SCHOOLS?

- The political and ideological narratives that play out in national and international context are intensified in school spaces which are often microcosm of larger societal structures. Thus, schools become sites of ideological formation and contestation.

- Critical theory provides a discourse and mode of critique for deepening understanding of the nature and function of schooling, and provides modes of analysis that help us uncover the ideologies and interests embedded in educational policies that inform educational frameworks, curricula and instruction, and the school-based interactions that take place in the everyday business of schooling (Giroux, 1983).
WHAT IS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY?

• Never has the need for more humane and inclusive pedagogical practices been greater. Education is occurring at a time where the world is connected in way that are both promising and challenging.

• Critical Pedagogy refers to an educational movement guided by both passion and principle to help students develop a consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, empower the imagination, connect knowledge and truth to power, and learn to read both the word and the world as part of a broader struggle for agency, justice, and democracy.
INFORMED AND INSPIRED BY THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS, WOMEN’S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS, LGBTQ RIGHTS AND DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENTS.

It underscores distribution of resources and recognition of marginalized groups at the macro, meso and micro level.

THE IDEOLOGY OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION THAT ALSO INTERSECTS WITH THE GOALS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION IS “TO PRODUCE CITIZENS WHO ARE ORIENTED TOWARDS CHANGE OF A RADICAL KIND, BEING CRITICAL OF SYSTEMS THAT REPRODUCE INJUSTICE AND SEEKING TO DESTABILIZE THE STATUS QUO.”

(MARTIN & PIRBHAI-ILLICH, 2015)
DEFINITIONS, GOALS AND FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

• Social Justice Education: “the conscious and reflexive blend of content and process, intended to enhance equity across multiple social identity groups (e.g. race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability), foster critical perspectives, and promote social action.” (Carlisle, Jackson, & George, 2006, p. 57)

• SJE places attention on the content material AND intrapersonal and interpersonal pedagogical processes by which students/participants are invited to wrestle with the subject matter.
FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

- Concepts of social identity groups and social location in historically situated systems of privilege and oppression and theory of social oppression and colonization of individuals and groups, privilege, hegemony, and liberation (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Hardiman et al., 2007).

- SJE foregrounds group level over individual struggles, in which “social groups” can be defined as “a group of people who share a range of physical, cultural, or social characteristics within one of the social identity categories” (Hardiman et al., 2007, pp. 56-57), for example, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, class, age, or physical/developmental/psychological ability (Harro, 2010).
SJE PEDAGOGY

● Critical-Dialogic Pedagogy--SJE pedagogy is informed by critical-liberatory feminist orientation and emphasizes both communication and relationship between groups. It strives to develop a critical analysis of inequality and taking action towards change. The dialogic dimension focuses on the process that occurs within the group.

● Intergroup Dialogue (IGD)--Informed in Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954). Mirrors the 4 conditions of ICT. Informed in Critical Dialogic Pedagogy. Goal of relationship building. Equal number of students from two different social identity groups.
IGD

• Four Stage Model which draws from dialogue and SJE theory and practice to guide and structure the practice of group formation, exploration of group differences, examination of contentious topics, and exploring the possibilities for action taking.
INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS

The European discourse on intercultural education is fully inscribed into Italian educational regulations.

Italy places an intercultural perspective at the center of the education.

Following the European documents, *The Italian way for the intercultural school and the integration of foreign students* (Miur, 2007) runs a delicate balance between two goals which contrast:

- Promotion of the capacity to value difference/diversity
- The search for social cohesion through shared values to support ‘plural and shared citizenship’
INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS

In Italy discrepancies exist between legislation (Miur, 2007; 2014), operational choice, implementation, and teachers’ perceptions of these.

The empirical research (Contini, 2017) addresses the questions of:

- the discrepancies between the conceptualization and the implementation of interculturalism (Zapata-Barrero, 2015);
- the necessity to develop the theorization on intercultural practices (Cantle, 2015).
ITALIAN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

Aims:

1. Capture how educators make sense of intercultural educational philosophy;

2. To highlight how they transform their knowing and reflection into pedagogy and practice.

The research focuses on the experience of 87 educators (19 school directors and 68 teachers) in 19 primary and middle schools in Abruzzo (Italy).

ITALIAN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

The contest of the research:

- Over the last two decades, the area of Abruzzo have seen an increase of students with migrant backgrounds.
- Schools find in need of new educational strategies to create positive educational environments for all students.
- Schools in Abruzzo provide an interesting context of study regarding the methods of translation intercultural education concept into concrete practices.
ITALIAN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

DATA/METHODS

1) Qualitative interviews
2) Document analysis (educational curricula, protocol documents regarding the welcoming of immigrant students, project related to intercultural education)
3) Ten focus groups

FINDINGS

1) Intercultural perspectives, ways of knowing and cultural competencies (Abstract, Add-On, Hybrid, Civic integration)
2) Saliency of Language and Literacy
3) Welcoming Practices
We labelled the four themes of Intercultural perspective as:

1) **Abstract and generic**: approaches grounded in broad universal statements.

2) **Add-ons**: approaches embedded with an “add-on” activity.

3) **Hybrid Practices**: approaches beyond an “add-on”, infused with a dimension of dialogue and analysis.

4) **Civic Integration**: approaches positioned under the large and ambiguous umbrella of interculturalism.
Some examples from the teachers:

“All school subjects contribute to interculture”.

“Scholastic disciplines - History, Geography, Literature, Math and others- are seen as occasions for diversity formation”.

In the teaching of History there is a focus on the connection with “geo-history, which values the relationship between Europe and the rest of the continents.”

“Intercultural education is the background upon which educational pathways [...] are developed, [...]” (School administrator).
"The school appreciates the foreign student as a herald of new cultures and understanding, presenting opportunities for enrichment and discovery for the whole class."

This is highly problematic as “foreign students” are viewed as the providers of “enrichment and discovery” for the dominant students.

This is exactly the unexamined power dynamic that must be examined.

Without a critical pedagogy, intercultural educators will cause harm in the name of a framework they imagine to be progressive.
“Add-on” does not incorporate new ways of knowing and understanding or embed inter-cultural curricula into the existing curriculum.

A teacher, for example, added to the existing literacy curriculum tales from her students’ country of origin.

“The school instated a linguistic and cultural diversity project entitled: ‘At school to listen, speak and…’ In short, the organizers provided specific material (stories, poetry, films, music, etc.) relating to the home country of every foreign student in the school”.

They are often a one-off event, but they fail to fully develop into a transformative practice and they do not impact on systemic change.
“Hybrid’ practice was the closest attempt to intercultural education. This approach expanded on the “add-on” by infusing dialogue and analysis. This meets the goals of intercultural education because of its emphasis on intercultural exchange. “Hybrid” practices came closest to a critical and transformative approach.
“[…] we compare characters from different countries who express their way of thinking and living and tell their personal stories about integration.”

The teacher above (primary school teacher) underlines the use of “personal” stories.

This denotes her understanding that lived experience is an important dimension to bring into an intercultural classroom space.
“In middle-schools we study comparative literature that focuses on different cultural realities.”

Again, the teacher uses “realities’, in the plural.

“We compare the various religious festivities and traditions […]”

“The teaching of tales and myths compares different cultures […]”

The teacher brings into the classroom the notion of different ways of being, of knowing, of experiencing the world, which is an important aspect of creating intercultural dialogue.

The teacher challenges a culturally homogeneous classroom space and acknowledges multiple perspectives.
These practices reflect the same ambiguities and tensions within the theoretical framework whereby civic integration is positioned under the large and ambiguous umbrella of interculturalism.

They are in line with the development of “active citizenship” and the move towards “social cohesion” (Commission of the European Communities, 2008; Council of Europe, 2008, 2014; Miur, 2007, 2014).

These efforts can be interpreted as the connection between “interculturalism” and “civic integration.”
“After having done projects regarding the Constitution and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights to promote a sense of citizenship, some school trips to important institutional buildings such as Montecitorio [Parliament] and Palazzo Madama [Senate building] were organized”.

As one may note, this teacher’s practice introduced the Italian Constitution to Italian-born, “second-generation,” and immigrant youth. This may be considered a practice of civic integration.
The following examples clearly understand intercultural education as citizen formation for all students:

“The disciplines all point towards the goal [...] to educate Italian and non-Italian students as a process of educating citizens”

“The intercultural dimension also appears during civic education lessons [...]”.
Another teacher connects intercultural education with the development of social cohesion:

“Teaching materials favor social cohesion, developing a vision of citizenship in line with constitutional values and charters of international rights.”

This vision lacks criticality as it does not account for issues of power and structural barriers embedded in practices aimed at “social cohesion.”
A critical approach to studying the Constitution may include an analysis of what rights native, second generation, residents, immigrants, and non-citizens have or do not have and how these realities affect the students within the classroom and in the community at large.

Bringing an analysis of power (a critical pedagogy approach to intergroup dialogue), and possibilities for social change would be more in line with an education that promotes critical thinking and social change.
THEME 2: SALIENCY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The valuing of linguistic and cultural diversity constitutes another dimension of intercultural education present both in European and Italian documents.

Nevertheless, beyond the declarations, the affirmation of “full respect” for the language and culture of migrants (Council of the European Union, 2004) exhibits a formula of compromise left to the discretion of each individual.

In Europe reduced emphasis placed on cultural recognition inserts itself in a context of reorientation of migrant policies towards ‘civic integration’.
THEME 2: SALIENCY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

In our research we found two dimensions:

1) Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Classroom Spaces;

2) Learning the Language of Instruction (ItaL2).

This reflects the various instances comparable in the discourse on language acquisition (Council of Europe, 2008; Commission of the European Communities, 2008; European Commission, 2008; Miur, 2007; 2014).
The teaching of multi-languages is not effectively implemented in schools. The affirmations on the value of linguistic diversity (Miur, 2007) is not supported by an institutional commitment towards the support of the language and culture of immigrants.

In the few cases language courses are offered by local associations.

Despite the lack of funding, teachers report that they attempt to create a multilingual environment as best they can.

While this is an important step it stays at the individual level thus not creating the systemic commitment needed to sustain multilingual practices.
Italians schools, in line with other European Union members (Eurydice, 2004; 2009), have implemented specific measures for teaching the language of instruction (L2 courses).

Language acquisition, as educators note, has an impact on students’ capacity to engage in the socio-cultural and scholastic life.

While important, language acquisition can be considered a “civic integration” policy.

It falls within intercultural practice.
THEME 3: WELCOMING PRACTICES

Welcoming practices support the positive interaction between children, the classroom community, and they establish the foundation for a positive scholastic journey.

From the start, Italian schools have avoided creating separate learning environments for foreign students. This choice exhibits a concrete application of the principle of universalism (Besozzi, 2001; 2008; Miur, 2007).
Many schools have ‘welcoming committees’ or ‘peer tutoring’.

Teachers noted the importance of welcoming practices and creating an inclusive environment, which is essential to intercultural dialogue and education.

Welcoming practices such as welcoming guidelines, welcoming committees, and multilingual school application forms, are aimed at newly arrived students, and not intercultural pedagogy per se.

In this light, welcoming practices are similar to “add-ons”.
CONCLUSION


IN SUMMARY, THE BOOK AIMS TO ...

• Advance the theoretical debate on interculturalism

• Appeal to strengthening the conceptual framework of intercultural education to move beyond the current institutionalized interculturalism as a form of governmentality.

• Add to a conceptualization and operationalization of intercultural education to create more social just educational spaces.

WITH DO THIS BY ...

• Making the case for a focus on culture, intercultural competence, and dialogue will not make schools more just space.

• Recognizing that while dialogue is a fundamental component of an intercultural education, it is NOT sufficient for a transformative education towards social justice.

• While Critical Theory is crucial to education, transformation, social justice, and social change, more is needed, and our most recent work begins to focus on decolonizing pedagogies.
Thank you
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● Slides 9-11: C. Veloria.
● Slides 12-16: C. Pica-Smith.
● Slides 24-26: R.M. Contini, C. Pica-Smith.