Emphasizing Multicultural and Anti-Racist Pedagogies as One Aspect of Decolonizing Education

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Abstract: Multiculturalism is a vital component of Canadian history and culture and this diversity deserves special attention. Learning diverse languages, cultures, and communicating with different nationalities within the school environment can help students appreciate the multiethnic nature of our world. It also helps them realize the inherent values, beliefs, morals, and principles of the cultures they meet. Recognizing the influences, impacts, and inspirations of various ethnicities on the cultural life of communities is critical. This paper discusses how multicultural and anti-racist pedagogies can be used as one of the elements of decolonizing education. Furthermore, the paper studies the role of colonialism in contemporary education and suggests several recommendations to prevent racism in the educational system. Incorporating members with diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and contributions is critical to promote inclusive communities. Supporting students to live, work, and communicate with other groups in society ultimately assists in developing more cohesive and productive communities.

Key Words: Multiculturalism, Diversity, Anti-racist, Educational Approaches, Decolonizing Education

Introduction

Intoday's classrooms, race, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and religious beliefs are different elements of diversity in education. For instance, according to Prescott, Muniz, and Ishmael (2018) "the number of students of colour enrolled in public schools has increased and these students are expected to make up the majority of high school graduates by 2025". With the increasing diversity, different teaching styles are required, and the need to incorporate and attend to these differences among students becomes challenging. Accordingly, emphasis on group relations and inclusivity among different cultures became a priority (McLeod & Smolska, 1997, p. 2).

Multicultural and anti-racist educational approaches have been developed to be inclusive of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The relationship between racism and colonialization has had an impact on different cultures all over the world. The nature and expression of racism are found in different behavioural practices and are shaped by historical, political, economic, and contextual factors (Dovidio, 2001; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). Individuals across various cultures have experienced different types of discrimination as a result of ethnocentric views from the dominant culture. After the success of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, overt racism is no longer socially acceptable in most places in the western world; however, covert racism has emerged causing uncensored values and negative feelings (Dovidio et al.,2002).

In education, several researchers argued that the dominant forms of knowledge and ways of thinking can be found in many elements in school systems, curricula, and epistemology (e.g., Baker, 2001; Dei 1996; Dovidio et al., 2002; Nieto, 2009).Nieto (2009) stated that the desire to increase educational opportunities to benefit a larger number of students has been of paramount importance for many educators. This is of particular interest with the increase of racial, linguistic, and economic diversity in schools and society (Nieto, 2009). Therefore, educators and educational leaders employ different approaches to decolonize education.

This paper discusses how multicultural and anti-racist pedagogies can be used as one of the elements of decolonizing education. Furthermore, the paper studies the role of colonialism in today's education system and suggests several recommendations in order to prevent racism in the educational system. Incorporating members with diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and contributions is critical. Supporting multicultural groups to live, work, and communicate with other groups in society ultimately assists in developing more cohesive and productive communities.

Literature Review

Multiculturalism pursues the inclusion of its diverse members and maintains respect for their differences. Fleras (2009) stated that Canada's national project of multiculturalism is based on a commitment to inclusiveness through social justice and recognition of the politics of identity and civic participation. Significant attention is given to acceptance of differences, protecting individual rights, reducing prejudice, and removing discriminatory barriers between communities. Supporters of multicultural education in Canada believe that its primary goals are to reduce

discrimination against oppressed groups and to distribute an equitable power among members from different cultures. Advocates of multicultural education play a critical role in increasing individuals' awareness of cultural traditions and experiences, and in assisting them to understand that their race, culture, language, and socialization experiences have value (Ramsey, Williams, & Vold, 2003, p. 17).

As both a policy and human rights issue, Fleras (2009) supports that Canada affirms the value and dignity of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity; such emphasis on the value of multiculturalism remains essential, especially as Canada's demographics become increasingly diverse in the twenty-first century (pp. 4-13). According to Richmond, (2001), immigrant and refugee arrival in Canada from Europe, Asia, and Africa resulted in many changes in government policies and laws that were established to protect diversity in the country (pp. 14-15).

As a term, multiculturalism first came into vogue in Canada in the 1960s to counter "biculturalism" and was popularized by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Burnet & Driedger, 2014). It refers to "an ideal of equality and mutual respect among a population's ethnic or cultural groups; and to refer to policies implemented by the federal government in 1971 and subsequently by a number of provinces" (Burnet & Driedger, 2014). Multiculturalism was also enshrined into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 (Section 27) and in 1988 the "Canadian Multiculturalism Act" which governs all the rights that citizens have in the country. Many authors (e.g., Banks, 2004, 2013; Cochram-Smith, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Wilson, 1997) define multicultural education using different perspectives, beliefs, minority behaviours, values, religion, languages, and identities.

According to Wilson (1997), multicultural education relates to education and instruction designed for the cultures of several different races in an educational system. He believed that multicultural education was based upon respecting and fostering cultural pluralism within national societies. The historical roots of multicultural education emerged during the national civil rights movements of 1960s and 1970s by various historically oppressed groups. For example, the women's rights activists advocated for educational reform. They challenged inequities in employment, education, income, and they insisted on a more inclusive curriculum that included their histories and experiences (Strong-Boag, 2016).

Through the 1970s, other oppressed groups, such as gay and lesbian groups, the elderly, and people with disabilities, found support for their movements to make education more equitable. As a result, different programs and policies emerged with slight modifications to the traditional curriculum (Sleeter & Grant, 1987, p. 421). For example, many African Americans and other people of colour challenged discriminatory practices in public institutions. They also demanded to have their histories and struggles reflected in textbooks and school curricula. The African Americans' movement encouraged other minority ethnic and racial groups such as Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and Indigenous peoples to raise their demands for inclusion in schools, colleges, and university curricula (Banks, 2004). Accordingly, ethnic studies developed as the first phase in the historical development of multicultural education (Banks, 2013, pp.73- 74). Afterwards, teachers who supported equality for their students of colour added Mexican Americans, Indigenous peoples, and Asian Americans to the list of heroes that were studied and to the holidays that the schools recognized and honoured (Banks, 2013, p. 74). According to Gollnick and Chinn (2016), other marginalized identity groups demanded that schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions make changes that would reflect their histories, cultures, and experiences in the United States. Therefore, multiethnic education was expanded to include gender, exceptionality, and social class. This broader understanding of diversity and education became known as multicultural education.

Even though theoretical literature regarding multicultural education has increased dramatically, a significant divide between theory and practice is noticeable. The practice of multicultural education in K-12 settings is often characterized by minor addition of diverse content into the curriculum or by diversity training for teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter, 1996). Cochran-Smith (2004) claims that although research devoted to studying the effects of multiculturalism has expanded, political conservatism and criticism of the civil rights movement were controlling multicultural education. She also stated that the emphasis of multicultural education has shifted away from social and institutional reform, toward reforming individual personal attitudes.

Multicultural education has been criticized since the early 1970s from the supporters of anti-racist education (Earl & John, 1994, p. 418). Supporters for anti-racist education believe that multicultural education does not represent minorities' real issues and concerns as it weakens minorities' resistance and keeps the power relationship

between black and white citizens "unchallenged" (Troyna, 1987, p. 308).Therefore, many communities (e.g., African Canadians, Asian Canadians) sent several appeals regarding human rights violations as a way to enforce and support anti-racism not only for individuals but also for institutions (McLeod & Smolska, 1997, p. 3). Dei (1996) stated that supporting anti-racism means criticizing the use of power and privilege "to elicit social reward and mete out social punishment/penalty along the lines of race and social difference. It means an exploration of issues of race, class, gender and sexuality as sources of socially constructed difference" (Dei, 1996, p. 254).

Currently, concerns are arising from diverse and conflicting interests of educational stakeholders (e.g., students, cultural workers, parents, families and local communities). They raise concerns about the practical ways of "producing, interrogating and disseminating knowledge locally, nationally and internationally" (Dei, 1996, p. 248). They use anti-racism as a new critical lens for questioning the way educational institutions traditionally do business. The cultural diversity in today's classrooms deserves special attention and acknowledgement for its differences within the dominant political culture. Rather than favouring either race or culture, we need to connect both approaches (Gillborn, 1995).

Due to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, educators have tried to incorporate the school curriculum with multicultural content. However, these attempts were faced with various challenges for different reasons because according to Banks and Banks (2010), it was challenging for educators to think differently about society and to attain a commitment to making the curriculum multicultural. They also stated that individuals who resist a multicultural curriculum believe that knowledge is power and including other cultures in the curriculum would challenge the existing power structure. Further, they believe that "the dominant mainstream-centric curriculum supports, reinforces, and justifies the existing social, economic, and political structure. Multicultural perspectives and points of view, in the opinion of many observers, legitimize and promote social change and social reconstruction" (p. 236).

During the 1980s and 1990s, different arguments developed regarding multicultural education: the degree to which the curriculum should be Western and European-centric; the need to reflect other cultures, ethnicities, and racial diversity in the United States; highlighting the role of African people in the United States; including the contributions of people of colour to the West; and improving the knowledge and cultural perspectives that teachers hold (Banks & Banks, 2010, pp. 236-237). Banks (2004) argues that to implement multicultural education institutional changes must be made to different elements in education such as the curriculum, teaching materials, teaching and learning styles, attitudes, perceptions, behaviours of teachers and administrators, and culture of the school. As a result, several approaches that support curriculum reform and multiculturalism in education were developed including the contribution approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach (Banks & Banks, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2007).

The contribution approach focuses on heroes, holidays, and separate cultural events. However, even with this approach, the curriculum remains unchanged in its basic structure, goals, and main ideas (Banks & Banks, 2010). Whereas, in the transformation approach, the fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed (Banks & Banks, 2010). More specifically, students are encouraged to view concepts and issues from several ethnic perspectives. However, to be able to apply this approach, a complete transformation of the curriculum is required. Nieto and Bode (2008) stated that multicultural curriculums must be anti-racist in order to be inclusive and balanced. Furthermore, the social action approach addresses social inequalities among groups in society at large as well as students' own experiences of power and social justice. When examining this approach, it does not pay sufficient attention to how social structures are formed. Also, it ignores power distribution among people in a society that may mislead students about the reality of policies and politics in society. Also, it may teach students that most social problems can be solved through forming collaborative relationships with institutional elites; however, this is rarely the case in real-world community change efforts (Alinsky, 1971).

As an educator who has taught in Kuwait, Jordan, The United States of America, and Canada, I have encountered students from diverse cultures and ethnicities. Through this, in order to assure inclusiveness, I believe that emphasizing multicultural and anti-racist education in order to decolonize education requires the following : (1) decolonizing thoughts, minds, and expectations towards students; (2) viewing students through the lenses of their cultural standards; (3) moving from differences to commonalities; and (4) promoting bilingualism and translanguaging towards decolonizing education.

Decolonizing Thoughts, Minds, and Expectations Towards Students

Decolonizing education cannot happen when educators or educational leaders think about students of colour from a deficit perspective. Research has suggested that stereotyping ethnic and minority youth is an issue among educators; Riley and Ungerleider's (2012) study discussed a self-fulfilling prophecy in which minority students were expected to perform lower due to having challenging external circumstances, and some teachers noted being surprised when those students performed well. Also, other studies such as Creese and Blackledge (2010), García and Wei (2014), and Wei (2018) argued how linguistic diversity among multicultural students had been viewed as a barrier to learning. Creese and Blackledge (2010) stated that linguistic diversity in classrooms has previously been seen as ''embarrassing,'' ''wrong,'' ''dilemma-filled,'' and ''bad practice'' (p. 105). To decolonize education, educators must shift this thinking so that minority students have equal chances for success. Diverse groups of learners must be free from stereotypical colonial thought processes so that they can be encouraged and challenged to fulfil their capabilities rather than expecting to fail.

Viewing Students Through the Lenses of Their Cultural Standards

Decolonizing education involves viewing students who have minority cultures different from the mainstream through their own cultural standards and norms. Viewing minority students in light of dominant beliefs does not produce an equitable perspective and often opposes or impacts their beliefs and traditions. Multicultural and anti-racist education is stressing the unique perspectives of individuals from varying ethnic groups that enable students to consider the differences that exist across cultures. They offer an opportunity for them to become more aware of their value orientations (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 247). In addition, they view each student's culture as a dynamic and individualized concept. Each culture represents many spheres of influence, including context within history, gender, age, religion, family relationships, group memberships, cultural beliefs and practices, historical context, and level of education (Lynch, 2016).

Moving from Differences to Commonalities

Emphasizing multicultural and anti-racist education to decolonize education requires efforts to go beyond equal opportunities and respect for existing cultural differences. It requires a pluralist transformation of public space, institutions, and civic culture. Tochon and Karaman (2009) argue that "the fear of otherness has often been what keeps such a society polarized. The building up of differences dissolves when the sense of fear and separateness fades away" (pp. 136-137). Various researchers (e.g., Bryant, 2019; Molinsky & Jang, 2016) argue that understanding cultural similarities and differences among students, identifying them, and discovering common ground, may be used as a basis for a working relationship with a positive approach, especially when working in a cross-cultural environment.

Bilingual Schools and Translanguaging Towards Decolonizing Education

When examining multicultural societies, Baker (2001) stated that bilingualism and diglossia co-exist. "Languages connected within an individual, and languages in contact in society, become fused with multiculturalism as a personal possession and as a focus in school" (Baker, 2001, p. 402).Garcia and Wei (2014) argue that "the common assumption that only the "target" language was to be used in language education programs, and of strict language separation, has become increasingly questioned as globalization has encouraged the movement of people and information" (p. 59). According to García (2009), translanguagingis one of the language practices used by bilingual students. She defines translanguaging as "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what is described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (p. 140).

As a pedagogy, translanguaging positions students' first language as one of the resources for learning rather than deficits. According to Garcia and Wei (2014), translanguaging gives learners the flexibility to take control of their learning, when and how to use the language "depending on the context in which they are being asked to perform" (p. 80). Allowing students to use their first language in classrooms will assist in achieving equality and expanding one's learning opportunities. It may be challenging to engage and excel in a school when students cannot speak the language of its curriculum.

In addition, it may be a struggle for students to find the motivation to stay in school when the cultural aspects that are important to them have no value in schools. This feeling of security will affect how people understand their relationship to the world and their possibilities for the future. A person's identity is active, circumstantial, and develops over time. Shalabi (2012) stated that the traditional public-school system does not acknowledge the struggle that minority students face while trying to cope with two cultures that cause the crisis of identity, stemming from the fact that children and their parents are physically distant from what they call their 'homeland' and their adopted country.

In sum, education has a critical role to play in meeting the challenges of diversity and difference. Equipping students with multiple lenses of criticality can assist them in understanding the complexities of society, prepare them to question different issues from various stances, and encourage them to be active members of society.

Recommendations

People's experiences, cultures, and languages play a critical role in shaping their personality. Providing opportunities for students to know and acknowledge their culture and the culture of others may increase their self-esteem and might help them seek different opportunities in life. Encouraging multicultural education will push students and teachers to rethink the traditionally unrepresented cultures using their lens and not the lens of the dominant culture. To achieve inclusiveness in education, educators, students, and administrators need to produce, reinforce, recreate, and transform ideas about race, equity, cultures, and racial differences in schools. Darling-Hammond (1996) argued that "policymakers increasingly realize that regulations cannot transform the schools; only teachers in collaboration with parents and administrators can do that" (p. 5). In order to implement multicultural and anti-racist education, changes must be made at all levels. My recommendations to achieve this goal include transformations to (1) colleges of education, (2) school administrators, and (3) educators.

Colleges of Education

Many teacher education programs have begun to support their programs with multicultural educational theories and goals outlined by experts in the field because research suggests that teachers prepared in a multicultural teacher education program are more capable of teaching diverse students than teachers who do not receive such preparation (Grant, 1994; Cwick , Wooldridge, & Petch-Hogan, 2001). However, according to Grant (1994), research is limited on the continuing effects of multicultural teacher education programs on teachers' beliefs and practices after a significant amount of time has passed since the completion of such a program. Therefore, continuous education and multicultural awareness are needed.

School Administrators

Resistance to change is common in schools with diverse nationalities. These changes might cause stress among students and staff. Therefore, school administrators have a great responsibility in educational planning. They may hire and supervise teachers and staff, direct several educational programs, manage budgets, connect schools with communities, and make decisions that affect education. Consequently, they play an essential role in emphasizing multicultural and anti-racist education. They can facilitate an inclusive school environment by hiring staff from different cultures, languages, and beliefs in school boards and parent councils. Treating the multicultural staff with respect, dignity, courtesy, and kindness is critical to create an inclusive environment that values diversity. School administrators can benefit from working with different cultures in conflict resolution by listening to different viewpoints coming from different cultural perspectives. Furthermore, having multicultural staff in school administration can assist in school planning and developing learning strategies. Including various cultures in the administration can broaden the administration's worldview and can guide them to understand, accept, and collaborate with cultural differences.

Educators

The role of a teacher is vastly different than what it used to be. Their job is to counsel students and help them learn how to use their knowledge and integrate it into their lives so that they will become active members of society. Being in multicultural society, teachers need to adopt different teaching methods to meet individual student's learning styles and to inspire them to be active members of society. Also, teachers need to raise students' critical

consciousness about their class, gender, racial identities and beliefs. Furthermore, they need to support their students to develop a better understanding of the surrounding cultures and ethnicities around them, and to think more deeply, not just about themselves, but about the world. Giroux (1992) encourages students and teachers to demolish racism by questioning the dominant practices or ideologies and by understanding the world and the diversities within the world. For Giroux, many essential skills can be taught in the classroom with the support of a critical teacher, "[b]y 'interrupting' representational practices that claim objectivity, universality, and consensus, critical educators can develop pedagogical conditions in which students can read and write within and against existing cultural codes while simultaneously having the opportunity to create new spaces for producing new forms of knowledge, subjectivity, and identity" (Giroux, 1992, p.31).

Also, teachers require continuous training to develop the critical mindset needed to work with students from diverse racial, cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. This requires taking some risks and coming out of one's comfort zone to understand the diversity in their classes. To achieve the goal of inclusiveness, teachers need to develop units and topics about different countries and places. Developing equity and inclusiveness helps students to focus on social issues related to race, gender, age, class, and disability. Inviting students to discussions allows them to express themselves and clarify their thoughts and insights.

In addition, choosing multicultural literature and resources and including the voice of people who are frequently silenced, people of colour, women, and people with disabilities assists in supporting inclusiveness. Also, it is critical for teachers to learn about their students' identities, cultures, families, beliefs, and experiences so that they may use that knowledge in their teaching. Knowing students' backgrounds will assist them in decision-making, classroom management strategies, instructional approach, and developing curricula

Conclusion

Throughout history, colonization and racism have had an impact on different cultures all over the world. The nature and expression of racism are found in different forms, shaped by historical, political, economic, and contextual factors (Dovidio, 2001; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). Many societies have experienced centuries of discrimination and racism as a result of ethnocentric views from others. Due to the success of the Civil Rights Movement, racism is no longer acceptable nor is it legal. However, a new form of racism has emerged: covert racism. Covert racism is a less obvious form of racism but can be similarly unjust (Amodio, 2009). According to Dovidio et al. (2002), covert racists "consciously endorse egalitarian values and deny their negative feelings" (p. 90) about other races. Instead of expressing one's feelings openly, he would express these feelings in other ways such as treating someone unfairly (Dovidio et al., 2002). Modern-day racism is more invisible, hidden, and needs critical thinking and a broader analysis of all components in our educational systems. Students who feel informed, competent, and able to make decisions will impact their lives, their children, and generations to come.

Multicultural and anti-racist education holds the power to transform societies. It is not only a yearly heritage celebration or an additional unit. Instead, it requires schools to change their traditional curriculum, school content, and teachers' training to accommodate and appreciate cultural diversity. Although it may seem challenging to include different cultures into school curriculums, activities, and policies, involving students from different cultures in classrooms can teach us as educators and as students many new things we would have never read in books.

Incorporating members with diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and contributions and supporting them to live, work, and communicate with other groups in society will ultimately assist in developing more cohesive and productive communities. When students see themselves in the curriculum, their voices are being heard and valued in the classroom. They will feel a part of the educational process, learning and obtaining the high expectations that are set for them, and beginning to believe that they belong. In sum, the global population consists of many different cultures and identities. By opening societies' minds to different languages, cultures, identities and principles, racism can be diminished in our classrooms.

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