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Multiculturalism and Peace Studies for Education Provision in Time of Diverse Democracies

Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine how multiculturalism and peace studies have been viewed in Brazilian and North American literature as gleaned both from Brazilian research studies and articles presented at Peace Education Special Interest Group (SIG) in American Education Research Association (AERA), within the scope of 2010-2014, which concludes that multiculturalism and peace studies may offer groundbreaking venues to promote education provision to every one, civilian and military students together with reforms in higher education.

Keywords: multiculturalism, peace studies, SIG peace education, higher education

Introduction

Building on a study that is still in progress and has examined how multiculturalism and peace studies have been viewed in Brazilian and North American literature as gleaned both from Brazilian research studies and articles presented at SIG Peace Education of AERA within the scope of 2010-2014, this work argues that multiculturalism and peace studies may offer groundbreaking venues to promote education provision to everyone since reforms in higher education are carried out.

The argument is that in the context of the reemergence of acts of racism and increasingly diverse democracies, peace studies and multiculturalism raise for the potential they present to build fruitful dialogues that should inform political discussions and public policies in education, chiefly those toward inclusion and meaningfulness of education provision and restraining factors.

Because education policies and practices are influenced by local culture, political, socio-economical, historical, geographical, demographical and religious factors (Mariappanadar, 2005), multiculturalism and peace studies grow in importance since they present innovative ways to consider diversity in school settings which should be considered in teacher training.

Promote original teacher training, significant teaching practices, and thus reform in higher education is a need in school settings that also require closely linked with transformational leadership and appropriate education policies that consider and embrace multicultural and peace approaches within societies surrounded by cultural, religious and ethnical conflicts.

In this context, we claim for a multicultural perspective for peace approach since it problematizes stereotypes and prejudices against those considered *different* from standard measures at school settings, either in military or civil education, so as to promote inclusion and provide the provision of relevant and meaningful education to all.

Departing from a post-colonial approach (Hall, 2003; Peters, 2005), our research has been geared to challenging monocultural curricula in educational policies and pedagogic practices, shedding lights on the relevance of promoting a peace culture through investment in multiculturally oriented education professionals and organizations, embracing the military – academy, institution of higher education and capacitation/training centers – mainly in Brazil, which although beyond formal educational patterns, feel the need today to be included in society standards in order to enhance dialogues related to the field of defense and security.

The multicultural perspective that guides our work overcomes cultural contemplation to reach postcolonial and postmodern approaches that seek a more fluid, hybrid and transitory comprehension of identity construction (Hall, 2003). Multiculturalism in critical postcolonial approaches departs from the simply celebration of differences to other steps that problematize difference constructions. According to Canen (2012) theoretical and methodological responses that crosscut borders are required to build dialogues and overcome universalistic and ethnocentric views. To understand this context as hybrid and mixed (Canen, 2012) is an alternative proposal to initiate a comprehension of the field that also requires hybrid and diversified educational responses.

Therefore, our contribution relates to pinpointing emphases and gaps presented in the studies at SIG Peace Education within 2010-2014. We highlight the fact that studies in military education also beg for further dialogues with peace education to unveiling curricular intentions, limits and capabilities that have guided soldiers' preparation. This perspective is chiefly relevant today, first because military personnel have been facing new challenges and threats regarding the nature of conflicts and violence which differ from the paradigm that had guided the industrial war. Thus, one of the challenges has been to prepare soldiers to cope with the multicultural dimensions of the missions nowadays. Second, because primary and secondary military school most of the time welcome not only military personnel's children/youth but civilians too, thus have been challenged to rethink their curricula and practices in a multicultural perspective for peace (Costa, 2011) to figure out how these children/youth have been interacting in school settings and how education provision has been offered to every one – civilians and military – and how education professionals have been working to reach a multicultural perspective for peace approach. It rises of importance mainly in countries directly involved in conflicts where children/youth might find themselves traumatized and segregated at school due to their parents' deployment in combat operations.

Our main objective is to analyze how multiculturalism has crosscut the referred SIG in the scope of 2010-2014 to leverage education provision to everyone; therefore, more democratic practices in education and societies. It includes challenging the view that tends to oppose military and civil education, arguing that military curricula have been challenged so as to cope with the tensions of hierarchal practices within a multicultural organization.

In this direction, higher education may also benefit from this study since innovative teacher training and significant teaching practices should take place in higher education and focus on inter alia curricular, evaluative and pedagogic practices that consider multicultural perspectives for a peace approach.

Methodology of the study

Qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) guided our study that addressed a documental study, gauging the state of art in peace studies and multiculturalism in an international conference. Thus, AERA was the focus, more particularly the Peace Education SIG, due to the need to articulate multiculturalism and peace studies from a broader perspective that embraces educational settings that aim to promote education provision for all.

The methodology was as follows: firstly, we explored the summaries available at the Annual Meeting Online Searchable Program on AERA site to calculate the summaries of papers presented in roundtable, paper and symposium sessions, as well as business meetings during 2010-2014 in the SIG mentioned that had taken multicultural perspectives within peace education on board. It was not our intention to verify full papers on the Online Paper Repository, chiefly because it is a volunteer decision of the authors to upload them. However, we are aware that it may reveal other theoretical and methodological perspectives. Therefore, we suggest that other researches fill this gap in order to bring to light other relevant information that may consolidate this study. Secondly, we highlighted both explicit and implicit multicultural categories, and finally we shed lights on the potentials they seemed to convey in terms of developing fruitful dialogues with peace studies in the scope of plural educational institutions, both civil and military as well as their impact on higher education, mainly on teacher training and practices.

It is worth mentioning that this is a work in progress that intends to wide its scope from the analysis of other SIGs that have been producing work on peace studies, such as the International Peace Research Association to realize its main theoretical and methodological trends for the field and its connection with multicultural perspectives.

Findings and results

A total of 113 abstracts were studied. 8 pointed out explicit multicultural perspectives, 84 implicit ones and 21 presented no multicultural connections. Some extracts analyzed are shown below.

In 2010, we realized that out of 25 summaries presented at AERA SIG Peace Education, 3 presented explicit multicultural perspective, whereas 21 presented it implicitly.

Costa and Canen's paper (2010) sought

[...] to analyze the state of art related to multiculturalism and peace education in Brazil, as gauged from the production of PhD theses and Master dissertations in the last years. It contends that multicultural and peace oriented education could benefit from increased partnerships between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and military organizations [...].

In 2011, out of 26 summaries presented at the referred SIG only 1 showed explicit multicultural perspective, whereas 21 showed it implicitly.

The theory and methodology of this research were anchored by critical and postcolonial multiculturalism... This work revisits the Brazilian national curriculum for foreign language... which highlights the commitment to fostering education

public policies, curricular and pedagogical practices that emphasize inclusion, challenge of marginalization and a democratic access to schooling (Costa, 2011).

In 2012, 23 papers were presented at the SIG. 2 presented explicit multicultural perspective whereas 12 presented it implicitly.

Canen and Canen's paper (2012) argued that

[...] peace education in a multicultural perspective could help imbue Higher Education curriculum development for peace. It contends that dimension should not be limited to a separate discipline in the way of an add-on to curriculum, but rather be part of the syllabuses... in the so-called "hard sciences" linked to technological areas.

In 2013, we figured out that out of 24 summaries, 2 presented explicit multicultural perspective and 16 showed it implicitly.

Rajuan and Bekerman's paper (2013) sought to

[...] investigate how teachers of the Integrated Bilingual Schools in Israel construct their school culture in relation to various outside pressures [...]. It was found that teachers perceive themselves as primarily pedagogical experts with a shared vision of multiculturalism and coexistence to the detriment of scholastic achievements [...].

In 2014, 15 papers were presented at the SIG and there was no summary with explicit multicultural perspectives; however, 14 had them implicitly.

The results of the analysis show that the majority of the summaries analyzed are permeated by implicit multicultural perspectives and it seems that explicit multicultural ones have been rarer. Most of the works are informed by critical multiculturalism, and although they all overcome cultural celebration, they have not focused on postcolonial approaches.

When we delved into the data presented and look ahead to promises and challenges to overwhelm for the next century as well as to capture contributions to the field of peace education we reach some findings and results.

Firstly, the limited number of papers presented in 2014 in the SIG; and secondly, that this year there was no paper with explicit multicultural dimensions.

Our study points out that it seems the SIG is looking forward to working under categories directly related to peace, such as violence, conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, restorative justice, restorative practices, culture of care, justice and peace, non-violence, peace education, concept of peace, humanitarian law and militarism. Although the majority of the summaries analyzed are permeated by implicit multicultural perspectives, it seems the SIG is trying to outline its field, what we consider positive. However, this argument is a gap our study did not intend to prove, but it leaves a door open for future findings.

As a result, our argument that multiculturalism and peace studies have the potential to promote partnerships, enrich the peace education field, and thus provide education provision remains valid. Out of 15 papers presented in 2014, 14 had implicit multicultural perspectives; moreover, in previous study (Costa, 2009; Costa & Canen, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c), it was highlighted that an articulation between multiculturalism and peace studies can strengthen a multicultural perspective for peace education.

As noticed before, intentions and similarities, as well as related categories between multiculturalism and peace studies lead to the conclusion that education research and organizations, either civil or military ones, would benefit from an

academic cooperation and partnership in times of globalization, multicultural workforce and on-going emerging cultural conflicts.

That is the reason why we argue the importance of building bridges in time of diverse democracies through an academic effort to embrace all educational organizations – formal or non-formal – public or private ones which are interested in urging forward governmental initiatives and public policies in education to working toward inclusion and peace at schools settings.

In previous work, for example, we developed studies with higher education institutions that realized “syllabuses in technological areas such as engineering could enhance the understanding of the meaning of multicultural organizations” (Canen, Canen, Costa, 2014). This should also be extended to military higher education curricula that have also been seeking for education research findings to support and guide their practices that look forward to capacitating their human resources to cope with the cultural challenges and threats in contemporary scenarios today.

Regarding this matter, we should cite Carter and Pickett (2014, p. 49) referring to dominant groups. These authors claim that “[...] scarcity of opportunities to interact with and come to know others with different perspectives perpetuates narrow thinking and inhibits the development of reciprocal relationships [...]”. This is especially true in multicultural organizations today, either civil or military.

In this context, we feel the need to promote dialogues between multiculturalism and peace studies so as to build more democratic practices in education and societies, mainly because the analysis of the referred SIG led us infer; firstly, that it seems the SIG is moving toward excluding other contributions to the field, and secondly, that this way, in near future Multicultural/Multiethnic Education: Theory, Research, and Practice SIG at AERA will be probably embracing studies whose primary intention would have been aimed at looking for connections and contributions with/to peace studies and peace education to promote education provision to everyone.

Conclusion

We have been witnessing global conflicts and the increasingly rise of diverse democracies in the US and around the globe. Diversity has never been so discussed as today, and thus it reinforces our argument that multiculturalism and peace studies are promising debates for fostering projects in either civil or military educational institutions – in formal and non-formal educational scenarios – to overcome monocultural curricula that raise intercultural studies and nurture multicultural for peace attitudes in education public policies and practices, either in Brazil, North America and elsewhere.

Multiculturalism and peace studies should also represent possibilities to handling with the tensions hierarchical organizations have been confronting to address the demands of multicultural organizations nowadays, mainly the military ones.

This perspective should be translated into teacher training in higher education institutions that seek to promote intercultural practices. Also, primary and secondary military institution could benefit from a multicultural perspective for peace approach in school settings so as to promote plurality and mitigate violence.

In this direction, we point out that studies we already presented at Peace Education SIG in previous years proved the challenges military institutions – from primary/secondary school to higher education institution as well as a peacekeeping instructional center – have been facing to deal with the needs of contemporary environments.

Recommendations to the field would include the need to explore the nature and meaningfulness of education provision and restraining factors in military schools, academies and colleges as well as their motivations, resistances to operate in multicultural and clashing societies and their claim to cooperate with civil higher education institutions, so as to overcome militarization criticisms and join efforts that seek to provide defense, security and peace for societies, essential for building better and sustainable futures.

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