

Ontological Foundations of Multicultural Education

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Abstract

This research was conducted with the aim of examining the ontological foundations of multicultural education by way of a qualitative method of a philosophical research: conceptual analysis. The research scope included all the books, journals, documents, and writings, where for sampling due to a plurality of sources in this area all the printed and digital writings available for the researches were applied. In this research, to collect the information sample notes designed by the researcher were used. The analysis in this paper was done by way of concept analysis, concept interpretation and theoretical inference. Research findings revealed two major philosophical roots and foundations of the multicultural education which are: postmodernism and critical theory. Postmodernism involves implications that explicitly imply multicultural education. These implications are: attention to "another", "honoring the distinction", and "protection of minorities". According to the research findings, ontological foundations of multicultural education: insisting on removing and ending metaphysics; denying absolute, fixed and priori realities; emphasis on differences about realities; denying a concrete and independent reality; formation of realities in line with needs, interest and cultural traditions; and attention to "virtual reality".

Keywords: Education, Multicultural education, Philosophical Foundations of multicultural education, Ontological Foundations of Multicultural Education.

1. Introduction

Today, we're born into a multicultural world that perceiving and changing it is only made possible through a pluralism view (Mellucci & Avritzer, 2000). In spite of development and complexity of communication systems and transformation of the earth into a global village, maintaining the linguistic and cultural identity for the ethnicities and nations has become one of the major social and political issues at today's world. It is this phenomenal variety that exists throughout the history and is discussed as "multicultural". Of fundamental missions in multicultural societies is designing a "multi culturally sensitive and responsive educational system which is regarded as the "multicultural education".

Multicultural education is an area of research whose major aim is the equality of educational opportunities for races, ethnicities and various cultural groups (Banks & Banks, 2005). For Green (2009) the multicultural education curriculum is an area of research whose major objective is helping students attain knowledge, attitudes and skills needed for fulfilling effective duties in a multicultural society. Also, for Chittom (2011) a multicultural curriculum seeks to provide students with a context for the appearance of other cultures into the real life.

The mission of the multicultural curriculum is to institutionalize a cultural pluralism philosophy in the educational system that should be based on reciprocal respect, acceptance, mutual understanding and moral commitment (Gorski, 2010). In fact, the multicultural curriculum is an idea or philosophy that places emphasis on cultural and ethnic diversity and affects all the educational system sections (Perkins & Mebert, 2011).

In relation with the multicultural education, researches have been performed of which we can have a brief reference to. Nieto, a conspicuous researcher in the area of multicultural education states that the schools growing diversity should be known as a valuable asset rather than a problem (Quoted by Moses, 1997; p. 374). Johnson (2011) in his research concluded that learners who are placed under an education based on different cultures are less likely to suffer because of racial differences and problems.

Respect for the cultural diversity approach will result in improving the cognitive growth of the learners, increasing racial and ethnic perceptions of them, reinforcing the social sense and civil participation of the learners, promoting cultural sensitivities of the learners, increasing quality of their performance and improving interaction the classrooms (Fernandez, 2010). Eventually, explaining respect to cultural diversity in the education system could provide a context for a better performance. (Feyisa & Kirstin, 2010) and is regarded as a key factor in developing the human capital in a multicultural society. (Hawkins, 2010).

Gharibi (2008, p. 152) in his research concluded that attention to cultures and different cultural contexts in education and learning could as required by the global necessities raise social adjustment and peaceful life capabilities and provide requirements for the formation of adjusted identities. Irvine (2012, p. 270) stated that ethnic groups of a society need an extent of solidarity; for this solidarity to be attained, some cultural pluralism

has to be accepted. In fact, the major principle in multicultural education is the creation of sensitivity towards an inherent plurality existing in the real world.

Hence, it is rational to state that accepting and enjoying multicultural education teachings and disseminating it in curricula will involve positive implications for learners. This approach will result in the cognitive and social growth of the students (Araghye & Fathi Vajargah, 2012, p. 192), helping expand and active participation of them within the education system (Nieto & Baud, 2008, p. 89), acquiring some cultural pride and ethnic identity (Ogo Okoye, 2011), socializing students (Askarian, 2007, p. 142), and moreover it becomes a rich source for learning (Sadeghi, 2012, p. 37) and more importantly, it results in success of the students (Javadi, 2000, p.10).

Since, any educational program has been designed on a special Theoretical foundation, it is necessary to illustrate its basics for recognizing the program better and accurately. By the same token, the principles and methods applied in the education system originate from different sources and they are of various types. According to credible sources and documents we can say that the education sources are wholly classified in the form of philosophical basics, sociological and psychological basics. By the philosophical basics, it is meant that class of philosophical forces and factors that affects the process of formulating objectives and determining means and requirements. The philosophy of education and the planner's belief in one of the philosophical schools will extremely build an educational orientation differently (Fathi Vajargah, 2002, p. 26).

Since, attention to various basics of any education could assist it in furthering programs and objectives, addressing multicultural education and extracting explaining its basics seem necessary. Under such circumstances, the fundamental issue of this writing is to posit the ontological foundations of multicultural education through which the researcher seeks to illustrate the philosophical foundation of the sort of education.

2. Research methodology

Because the current paper is concerned with some qualitative variables and is in the philosophical and theoretical areas, the methodology is qualitative and of a philosophical research: conceptual analysis; a kind of analysis by which we can obtain a credible understanding of the common sense of a concept with a set of interrelated concepts is called "conceptual analysis". Here, to obtain a sense in the read of multicultural education, the concept interpretation approach in the philosophical analytical research was applied.

The research scope included all the books, journals, documents, and writings, where for sampling due to a plurality of sources in this area all the printed and digital writings available for the researches were applied. In this research, to collect the information sample notes designed by the researcher were used. The analysis in this paper was done by way of concept analysis, concept interpretation and theoretical inference.

3. Research findings

According to the Derrida's view, the western metaphysics has long been seeking to base its own philosophical foundation on a special ground. Since Plato onwards, Logos has been a foundation for philosophical debates. Logos has long been employed in different meanings of intellect, thoughts, words, speech, research and accuracy of intellectual meanings. For this, Derrida has named the western metaphysics as Logo centrism or intellect (speech)-centered. Reality, wisdom, value and aesthetics in the western philosophy are in an unbreakable link with Logos. Derrida looked at the western metaphysics on the same foundation in which bipolar spectra like absence and presence, body and soul, form and content and the like have constantly been debated and the first pole has always been preferred to the second pole (Farmihani Farahani, 2004).

Postmodernism intends to disintegrate and crumble and deconstruct the western metaphysical duality. The most wide ranging term applied by the postmodernists in this area is the "holistic metaphysics". Among other concepts used by postmodernists is "different metaphysics". Derrida and Delves inspired by Heidegger and Freud have attempted to trade the presence metaphysics for the different metaphysics. The presence metaphysics as the cornerstone of the western philosophy posits that reality is completely a unity and differences and discrepancies have no real identity, whereas postmodernism deals with differences about reality, regarding it one of the reality characteristics.

Like Heidegger, Foucault in his late works creates a special kind of history as replacing ontology that focuses on potentiating cultural functions of the nature of the human existence (Derifous & Robino, 1997). Foucault has sought to examine differences in the world-views prevailing on the world in various new metaphysics or special world-view. He argues that old people used to believe in the cosmic order in which hierarchy was a determinant of a value system. However, the modern world-view- formed from the 18th centuries onwards differs fundamentally with the traditional word-view. Of the properties of the modern world-view which is sometimes called Humanism-is that the value system originates from the inside the person not from the cosmic order where the person was considered to have been a trivial part of it. The modern Humanism values and honors the ordinary and daily life of people such as production, consumption, love, an formation of families highly, while in the traditional world these sorts of activities are of a secondary importance and are

regarded as the animal aspects of the human life (Haghighi, 1995).

From the view of the poststructuralists, reality is hidden in some instances and is latent from the direct observation and common sense. Reality for some of the postmodernists is a story. There is no objectivity in the outside world; rather it exists only on the minds of those who receive it. No one can claim to enjoy more power and objectivity; because all kinds of reality are built by human.

Boudier appears to have used the term "virtual reality" more than anyone. He maintains that the current world is created through pictures fanciful imagination and imitations and simulations. We as humans build our own realities and this reality is a production of our imagination. Ingenuity and scientific needs. The present world is a world with self-reference signs. Boudier speaks of four developmental stages of reality and experience like the following: 1) direct experience with reality, 2) work with experiences and representation of reality, 3) severe and strict inference of reality, and 4) virtual realities or imaginations or simulation in which orders are held to be reality.

Wilson stated that there are various realities corresponding to various identifiers. As a result, there is no reality being independent from an identifier. Concerning reality, Foucault states reality is not something that expects to be discovered. Reality is not concrete. We form reality in parallel with needs, interest and cultural traditions. In fact, we can say that: there are various realities and each has its own position in terms of acceptance and coordination. Foucault was not interested in a universal reality and anything beyond the natural world.

Griffin is one of the theorists in the area of postmodern theology and is among the postmodernists who have employed postmodernism methods about the concept of God and nature. Griffin postulates a positive and reformist postmodernism and seeks to expand a postmodern world-view. This world-view rejects some definite scientific and philosophic concepts which are specific to a scientific and modernist philosophy, particularly such concepts as belief in atoms, determinism, and Descartes' dualism of mind and body (Griffin, 2002; & Griffin, 2000).

It is noteworthy, most western modern philosophies, including pragmatism, existentialism, analytical philosophy and the like have withheld to deal with general and abstract discussions of a theoretical philosophy and metaphysics, and look negatively at the ontological discussions, on which the human truth hinges. Postmodernism is no exception to this rule.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Two major philosophical roots and foundations of the multicultural education which are: postmodernism and critical theory. Postmodernists consider the present education system as a factor for conveying the dominant culture, i.e. the premium and elite culture, while a more favorable education for them is the one in which other cultures are taught and in this area they employ such terms as (education of various perspectives) and (border education).

Postmodernism involves implications that explicitly imply multicultural education. These implications are: attention to "another", "honoring the distinction", and "protection of minorities". Postmodernists pay attention to racial, ethnic and gender ethnicities of the society because of honoring the distinction and opposing to the dominance of the governing culture.

On the other hand, the end goal of the critical theory is "liberalization" and "emancipation". The advocates of this theory maintain that the governing group through latent curriculum applies its own objectives and teachers and students are often unaware of them. For them, the curriculum serves the objectives of the governing class where school is placed to serve it unknowingly. For this, this theory considers its own end as for emancipation and liberalization.

It should also be mentioned that these two philosophical basics (postmodernism and critical theory) are found to be fundamentally different and on the other hand, postmodernism opposes any metanarrative such that Leotard, one of the prominent philosophers in this process defines postmodernism as a belief against metanarrative (Najjarian et al, 2002).

On the other hand, the critical theory considers its own major objective as the met narrative of "liberalization" and "emancipation". Sidorkin (1999) states that this ambivalence in fundamental philosophical assumptions of the multicultural education makes it vulnerable against criticism, meantime he claims this could be a strong point for the multicultural education rather than a weak point. He has also attempted to illustrate by using the "polyphony" idea by Michael Bachtin that this maladjusted theoretic views could get along with together inside a colloquial commitment framework quite effectively.

According to the research findings, the multicultural education ontological basics could be classified as follow:

1. Insisting on removing and ending metaphysics and avoiding delving into such debates intentionally.
2. Negating absolute, fixed and priori realities.
3. Emphasizing on differences and discrepancies about the reality and considering it as characteristics of reality.

4. Denying a concrete and independent reality and in turn believing in a constructed reality created by humans.
5. Formation of realities in parallel with needs, interests and cultural traditions
6. Attention to "virtual reality", because the present world is constructed through pictures, fanciful imagination and imitations and simulations.

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