



Teacher-Educators' Perception Of Multiculturalism In A Unique Programme For Ethiopian Pre-Service Teachers In Israel

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Abstract:

This paper explores the multiculturalism perception among teacher-educators who taught at an Israeli academic college of education a unique programme designed for Ethiopian pre-service teachers. The research method was grounded in the qualitative-interpretive approach of the case study type. The research population consisted of nine participants and the research tools were semi-structured interviewed. The findings indicate a high perception of multiculturalism among the teacher-educators, the significance of learning the Ethiopian culture, the adoption of teaching strategies suitable to the student population as well as the creation of a climate of equalitarian pedagogy. All the teacher-educators emphasised that teachers should be sensitive to the different, understand the needs of students with a different cultural background as well as provide an opportunity and a place to expose and be exposed to another culture. This multicultural perception assisted the lecturers to reduce prejudices and stereotypes by observing issues from points of view of a different cultural group. This study recommends implementing a curricular reform and promoting social justice.

Keywords: *multiculturalism, education for multiculturalism, reflective multiculturalism, multiculturalism in teacher education.*

years, this perception has undergone changes: from the local-focused perception which views a prompt implementation in the curricula as its immediate goals and until the perception prevalent today, namely perceiving the field as an educational "ideal" in a multicultural and democratic society. This ideal applies to the entire population, minorities as well as dominant groups which belong to the "main stream". The new

Theoretical background

Multiculturalism

The perception of education for multiculturalism has penetrated the education system already during the 1960s, following social and political occurrences in the western world. It was mainly manifested in the field of university curricula and, later, in other educational institutions. Over the

order of priorities. Yona (2011) distinguishes between multiculturalism in common public spaces and multiculturalism in separate public spaces which are not common. The Israeli society is facing a challenge, i.e. maintaining multiculturalism in a common public space. It is important to discuss the differences between the common spaces in the context of identities and practices, allocating resources in a differential manner without branding and hierarchy. Moreover, Yona (2011) reiterates that the multicultural attitude is defined as open, flexible and having a dynamic dimension due to the changes transpiring in society.

Education for multiculturalism

Education for multiculturalism facilitates a dialogue of respect between the groups and mutual enrichment out of openness to the "other" and, at the same time, getting acquainted with the "self". This is done through 'education for all' (Klein 1993; Banks 1996; Steinberg 2010), aspiring to nurture the various social and cultural groups, whether this concern minorities or dominant groups in society. Education for

perception of multiculturalism is impacted by the consequences of globalisation and technology processes. Globalisation was initially perceived as a process eliminating particular identities and turning the world into one global village. However, it became apparent (Maaluf 2010; Oron 2010) that it induces reaction and increases the search for a more limited and intimate group identity - local, ethnic, religious and national – as well as canonization of the past. The approach represented by Maaluf (2010) considers globalisation as an opportunity for a new identity perception,

... a perception conceived as the total of all forms of our belonging and, under its patronage, belonging to the human community will occupy an increasingly growing central place until one day it becomes the main form of belonging without erasing our numerous private forms of belonging" (p. 17).

Yona (2011) and Yona and Shenhav (2005) emphasise through renewed thinking the need for a democratic and liberal society. This society will formulate a multicultural agenda acknowledged by the political institutions which refer to relations between the rights, none of which is highest on the

another dimension to those suggested by Banks, namely the reflective dimension. This concerns developing an ability to look upon the "self" in the context of learners' mother-culture and of other cultures. This constant observation of the learners into their own behaviours, beliefs, views, values and opinions in relation to the culture of "others" is at the core of the reflective multiculturalism perception. In this sense, the model proposed by Hoffman (1996) bridges between the perception of education for multiculturalism, striving to foster and offer equal opportunities to different social and cultural groups and the perception which considers the release of learners from their cultural boundaries as a central component.

Multiculturalism in Israeli curricula

Lamm (1996) presents the organisational structure of the Israeli education system as a function of the socio-political situation. He argues that this structure results from a pluralistic position which he underscores as an ideal position, "acknowledging the existence of cultural heterogeneity of societies or countries" (p. 207). Hence, pluralism defined by Lamm (1996) is

multiculturalism is perceived as an educational field aiming to improve equality for all learners, namely creating equal educational opportunities for children from different ethnic, racial, cultural and social origin. This applies to contents, concepts, principles, theories as well as historical, social and behavioural paradigms from the fields of behavioural sciences, ethnic studies and even gender studies (Banks 1996). Nevertheless, education for multiculturalism strives to allow learners to function in a valued-effective way in a democratic and pluralistic society by releasing pupils of all groups from their cultural and ethnic boundaries, enabling them to freely cross cultural boundaries. This can be achieved by means of interpretive and varied knowledge, based on critical reflections (Banks 1996; Banister and Maher 1998).

Education for reflective multiculturalism

Hoffman (1996) supports the theory of Banks (1996), relating to learning and teaching components of various cultures, of the other pedagogy and of the critical, multi-directional view of the various occurrences. She adds, though,

multiculturalism", namely knowing the "self" in light of knowing the "other" and vice versa (Hoffman, 1996).

The approach suggested by Banks (1996), Hoffman (1996) and Vavrus (2002) stipulates that "multicultural" studies should not be organised in separate frameworks but rather as an integral part of the education system in the spirit of "education for all". This approach is more significant and acceptable than the approach which professes enhanced understanding of the self identity of each group separately.

The discourse about curricula in Israel should undoubtedly create an infrastructure of education and literacy, common to every citizen in the country. The curriculum should reflect the cultural-social needs of the various groups. This does not relate only to the cultural reflection within the curricula platform, e.g. addition of "culture studies" but also the curriculum derivatives: teaching methods, equal reference to all the learners in the class, the class discourse which should be dialogical and grounded in the

acknowledging the individuals' right to live by norms of their cultural group without undermining their other rights as citizens of their country. At the same time, pluralism negates the state's right to intervene in citizens' decisions associated with their social and cultural references (Lamm, 1996, pp. 208-209).

This is an era which invokes "differentiation within uniformity", namely multiculturalism, as defined by Yonah (2011) and Lamm (1996), encompassing features such as: dialogue between social groups on the one hand and an attempt to reach a voluntary agreement, on the other.

Based on the situation described above, the education system should focus on curricula which emphasise various aspects of occurrences from different perspectives (Banks 1966); allow the various learners to express their "voice" in different ways (Diamond and Moore 1995); and offer other teaching methods, e.g. teaching in a constructivist way, dialogical teaching and equalitarian teaching (Banks 1996). This perception advocates that knowing the "other" is insufficient; we need to know also the "self". Consequently, the curriculum of multicultural education should highlight "reflective

disciplinary studies) in the form of different views and presentation of cultural alternatives.

Many studies in Israel investigated multicultural perceptions in teacher education programmes at academic colleges in education. Three of them are presented below.

The first study engaged in multiculturalism in teacher education curricula and in teacher-educators' perception of multiculturalism. Ezer, Millet and Patkin (2005; 2006) investigated curricula in two Israeli teacher education colleges (located at the central and southern parts of the country). Their research findings show that education for multiculturalism is on the agenda of both colleges and awareness of it is growing. As far as the teacher-educators' perception, one can see that they know what multiculturalism means and they obviously maintain that it should be more significant in teacher education colleges. In spite of the different ethnic composition of staff members in the two colleges, their worldview is similar. However, the findings of Ezer, Millet and Patkin (2005; 2006) illustrate to what extent the background of the teacher-educators affects their

constructivist approach to teaching and in the creation of an empowering school climate.

A multicultural approach in teacher education

Teacher education curriculum too should reflect transformations in society and culture as well as the educational approaches which underscore differentiation in society and respect it. The approach to multicultural education should be mirrored in all the curriculum sectors: education studies, didactic studies and disciplinary studies. Core studies should facilitate development of a uniform discourse for all learners in their capacity as citizens of the state. Unique studies for various groups can exist in at least two frameworks: within the framework of personal learners' choice, namely being able to elect courses which echo elements of a culture which they are interested to learn and within the framework of unique enhanced studies, for example in Hebrew and sometimes in the mother tongue of learners for whom Hebrew is not their native language. The pluralistic education for all will be manifested by various courses in all the three sectors of the curriculum (education studies, didactic studies and

Israel. It dealt with the issue of multiculturalism in teacher education from the point of view of the pre-service teachers themselves. Moreover, it examined characteristics of teacher education at a Jewish-secular college whereby the learner population belongs to different cultures. The pre-service teacher participants were a religious Jewish female, an Arab male, a Druze female and a Bedouin female who had taught at a State-Jewish school. The pre-service teachers projected positive echoes about activities which took into consideration their other culture, recommending activities which would contribute to multicultural education. In fact, the changes suggested by the pre-service teachers lead to the establishment of a multicultural teacher education college. One of the research recommendation called for "re-shaping studies at the college, defining its designation in parallel to theories dealing with multiculturalism" (Reichel and Mor 2007, p. 99).

Research question

What is the multiculturalism perception of teacher-educators of a unique education

worldview. That is, the immigrant teacher-educators, unlike their Israeli born colleagues, emphasise integration from the aspect of success in studies as well as the wish to avoid ethnic separatism. All the teacher-educators clearly manifest the dilemma of segregation versus integration.

The second study (Millet and Gilad 2004, 2005) exposed multicultural components in a unique programme designed for Ethiopians pre-service teachers in a college of education at the south of Israel. It described the figure of the ideal teacher in the eyes of Ethiopian pre-service teachers attending this unique programme. The programme underscores the following components: integration in the field of contents, decreased incidence of prejudices and equalitarian pedagogy. The teacher's figure was depicted in two salient aspects: a sensitive and caring teacher for all learners and an authoritative and knowledgeable teacher.

The third study (Reichel and Mor 2007) explored the narrative of four pre-service teachers in a college of education located at the northern part of

analysed and triangulated by the two researchers and another colleague. Data analysis was performed on two levels: a general level and individual level.

The categories were chosen on the basis of the professional literature and according to the data obtained from the findings (Shkedi, 2005).

Findings

The findings presented here are connected to the research question, one of the four questions in the whole research. They manifest the viewpoint of the teacher-educators who lecture in the unique programme built upon the principles of multicultural education as well as expose the educators' multicultural perception.

The programme lecturers' perception of multiculturalism

The research findings illustrate that the issue of education for multiculturalism has been put on the agenda of the teacher-educators involved in the programme and that the teaching staff members are highly aware of this issue. Moreover, most of the lecturers support the unique training programme for Ethiopian pre-service teachers,

programme designed for Ethiopian pre-service teachers?

Methodology

The present study is part of a comprehensive research conducted in a qualitative-interpretive approach and constituting a case study. The research population in this part of the research consisted of six teacher-educators who lecture in a unique programme for Ethiopian pre-service teachers and three of the programme designers who are members of the college of education management. The programme was conceived as social-valued need in a college located at the southern part of Israel. This was due to the fact that no Ethiopian teachers were employed in schools around the college and no Ethiopian pre-service teachers were registered. The programme was built according to the principles of particular multiculturalism (a separate group for Ethiopian immigrants) during the first stage of the training and according to the pluralistic approach (joint studies with the entire student population of the college) during the second stage. The research tool included semi-structured interviews, which were

academia in order to enable them to be integrated later on in regular classes".

Lecturer 'C': "The programme is important and good mainly from the aspect of learning as a homogeneous group during the first year. As a lecturer who is well aware of multicultural perceptions and of sensitivity to the needs of students from different cultures (based on my teaching experience abroad and on my work with multicultural student groups), I believe it is important to teach them at first as a homogeneous group. They (pre-service teachers) prefer working as a group, they feel confidence, otherwise they are 'swallowed' by others... During my years of teaching in other heterogeneous classes at the college (academic preparatory classes), which comprise students from all sectors and cultures, the Ethiopian pre-service teachers sit at the edges of the classroom and in the last rows and do not feel part of the entire group".

Lecturer 'D': "I think we have to teach them (the Ethiopian pre-service teachers) as a group. In such case they don't have to deal with the shame of learning with other 'regular' students. Mainly

emphasising the importance of teaching them as a separate group (during the first year) and their integration in regular classes (during the rest of the programme).

Lecturer 'A': "... it's appropriate that participants in this programme study during the first year as a homogeneous group both from a systemic and personal point of view. After all, this is a different group from social, cultural and even national aspects (not the best absorption process). Being members of a different group, they (pre-service teachers) feel at ease being together. This reduces anxieties, competitiveness... this sense of togetherness induces a lot of confidence".

Lecturer 'B': "The programme is appropriate and adequate. The very fact that they have joined the programme indicates their (Ethiopian pre-serviced teachers) positive thinking. They think about personal development and about their future contribution to the community – and this is an important move. Consequently we should promote them with massive support during the first year, when they begin their way in the world of

The assertions show that most of the teacher-educators lecturing in the programme, six out of seven teacher-educators, support the unique training programme for Ethiopian pre-service teachers. Furthermore, they underscore the significance of teaching in separate groups in order to offer an opportunity for learning based on narratives from their heritage on the one hand and on reinforcing academic core skills on the other.

The programme designers' perception of multiculturalism

Below are assertions of the three programme designers who participated in this study:

'A': "In order to attain independence, we have to provide crutches, particularly in groups of weak populations like the Ethiopian pre-service teachers. Not to act instead of them but to assist them. It is also important to demand from them as well as give to them so that later on they can be integrated in regular classes. We should properly deal with the Ethiopian pre-service teachers' personal needs, accompany them individually and be aware of the problems and difficulties which they encounter day by day".

when teaching core and support subjects, for example Hebrew and English. Only after being reinforced and receiving foundations in languages they can be integrated in current courses studied as the college".

Lecturer 'E': "Since they have no solid basis in learning, reading and scientific writing skills, it is important to teach them in a separate group. They (the Ethiopian pre-service teachers) pour out their heart, telling personal and familial stories which they would not have divulged had they studied with the rest of the students at the college. I am aware of it and allow them to describe the stories which serve as tools and examples for teaching in class".

Lecturer 'F': "I believe it is essential to teach them (the Ethiopian pre-service teachers) separately at least during the first year. They need a lot of reinforcement and a slightly different way of learning than the other students. Moreover, the Ethiopian pre-service teachers demonstrate an interest and a wish to be together at the beginning. They feel better, more confident".

education, the Ministry of Education and the Ethiopian community fully supported the implementation of this programme which makes academic education more accessible and available to a weak population.

Teacher-educators' perceptions of multiculturalism in class

The research findings illustrate that teacher-educators who teach Ethiopian pre-service teachers both as a separate (homogeneous) group and as a group integrated with other students (heterogeneous) are aware of the cultural aspects of Ethiopian immigrants. Most of them emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for discourse about Ethiopian heritage, enabling the pre-service teachers to present narratives from their personal world as well as discuss texts from the Ethiopian culture.

One of the lecturers specified: *"It is very important to allocate room for the heritage... I take texts from their culture and work on them..."*. Another lecturer pointed out excitedly that she had never been acquainted with the Ethiopian world and culture and that she was given the opportunity

'B': "Side by side with the massive support, mainly during the first year, there are also explicit academic requirements and there are no concessions. A multicultural society must acknowledge the differentiation and provide an opportunity by reinforcing and promoting populations from low socio-economic sectors".

'C': "Both the Ministry of Education which greatly supported the programme and the Ethiopian community that views the programme as a good opportunity for training Ethiopian pre-service teachers responded favourable to the programme. Moreover, the fact that the number of Ethiopian teachers in the education system is very small, enhances the significance of the programme and its future contribution to the system".

The assertions indicate the significance of the programme and the fact that the programme designers perceive it as essential in a multicultural society. The unique programme for training Ethiopian pre-service teachers has, undoubtedly, been conceived out of a real need and was welcomed by all the bodies involved in planning and implementing it. The academic college of

the Ethiopian pre-service teachers' belief in themselves, It enhances their self-image and provides an intimate learning environment which enables them to ask and reply without fears or shame.

Multiculturalism in contents and teaching styles

The research findings demonstrate uniformity in teacher-educators' perceptions of the courses contents and teaching methods. The lecturers who teach the Ethiopian pre-service teachers in a homogeneous class and those who teach them in both homogeneous and heterogeneous classes stipulated it is necessary to change and adapt the teaching methods to Ethiopian immigrants, though without the need to change the contents and learning subjects in the course. Moreover, these teacher-educators pointed out that, when teaching in a heterogeneous class, they do not change the teaching methods. Rather, they perceive the Ethiopian pre-service teachers as "regular" students.

Five out of six teacher-educators teaching in a homogeneous class said that they allowed the

to learn and cherish them. She believes that it is essential to allow Ethiopians to preserve their culture and express their tradition. For example: *"When teaching poetry, I include poems written by Ethiopian immigrants and/or help them to write down poems and narratives from their world... the story of their immigration to Israel"*.

However, one of the lecturers stipulated that in a homogeneous class there can be no discussion about multiculturalism and that the very fact that Ethiopians study as a separate group underscores the "you" versus "us" or "in their world" versus "in our world".

Another lecturer pointed out: *"I do not attribute significant and deep meaning to the multicultural aspect during lessons. I do it when the topic emerges during the lesson and do it to the proper extent"*. For example, when teaching the concept of Zionism I emphasised the religious rather than the cultural aspect, *"because the Zionist concept is essentially diversified and pluralistic"*.

To sum up, almost all the lecturers, five out of six, indicated that learning separately during the first year of the unique training programme, reinforces

hours". This consideration of the students' needs does not come at the expense of the learning/teaching quality or completion of the assignments required by the training programme.

Discussion

The way teacher-educators teaching in the unique programme for Ethiopian pre-service teachers perceive multiculturalism is in line with findings of studies engaging in multicultural education. These studies highlight the need for implementing a curricular reform, striving for equalitarian pedagogy, exhausting multicultural competences of different groups and enhancing the value of social equality as essential and crucial for the promotion of a just and democratic society (Ezer, Millet and Patkin, 2006). The findings indicate a high perception of multiculturalism among the teacher-educators who teach in this unique programme. All of them emphasised that teachers should be sensitive to the different, understand the needs of students with a different cultural background as well as provide an opportunity and a place to expose and be exposed to another culture. This multicultural perception assisted the

Ethiopian pre-service teachers to talk about their heritage, bringing examples from their personal world. As far as teaching strategies are concerned, all the teacher-educators mentioned that they changed their teaching methods mainly from the aspect of pace and illustration. For example, reading texts at a slow pace, in a different intonation and with many breaks in order to make sure that the Ethiopian pre-service teachers students do indeed understand and follow the course of the lesson. Similarly, in linguistic literacy, they dedicated more time to the teaching of fundamental terms and basic skills, mainly written and spoken expression.

One lecturer pointed out that he *"was teaching like a supporting father rather than a strict teacher"*. This lecturer tried teaching Ethiopian pre-service teachers in a more familial and understanding approach in order to meet them half way and avoid offending them. Furthermore, he gave them concessions in tests, easier assignments, many exercises but in small scopes as well as extensive support and encouragement in the preparation of works and exercises required by the course. *"I dedicate to them many hours beyond the teaching*

service teachers themselves and the teaching staff involved in the unique training process.

Moreover, the teacher-educators changed their teaching strategies and adapted them to the student population. They believed it is important and necessary to slow down the teaching pace and apply numerous and concrete examples. When relating to equalitarian pedagogy (Banks, 1996) it is necessary and essential to use teaching strategies and methods which take into consideration the learners' cultural-social background and the learners' capabilities. Consequently, the lecturers applied numerous examples from cultural, ethnic and social sources of Ethiopian Jewry in order to clarify principles, concepts, generalisations and theories, analysing them from different viewpoints.

The success of the unique training programme designed for Ethiopian pre-service teachers and the attitude of the teacher-educators towards the challenge of teaching in a multicultural perception call, in fact, for introducing a curricular reform as well as implementing a critical approach to

lecturers to reduce prejudices and stereotypes by observing issues from points of view of a different cultural group (Hoffman, 1996).

In addition to the understanding and sensitivity which the teacher-educators manifested towards the Ethiopian pre-service teachers, they were also willing to get acquainted with and learn the Ethiopian culture. For that purpose, the college organised a one-year in-service training course in which lecturers and Ethiopian students studied the Ethiopian culture and discussed selected issues of family, youth, education and values. Moreover, the lecturers obtained information relating to the cultural background of the Ethiopian pre-service teachers. This could benefit the teaching/learning processes and bring them to the required academic level.

The pluralistic, humanistic and liberal perceptions of the teacher-educators, combined with the in-service training course designed to offer a better acquaintance and understanding of the Ethiopian culture features, brought about a positive learning climate which helped both the Ethiopian pre-

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