Educating Global Citizens: A case study of a bilingual nursery school

Tozun Issa
London Metropolitan University (UK)

Introduction

How well do schools prepare children as future citizens of multicultural/multilingual societies? Is teaching 'formal democratic skills' (Nielsen and Froda 2001) sufficient or do schools need to actively plan for promoting fundamental principles of a harmonious society not as tokenistic practices but modeled on real life situations of multi-cultural societies at large? In this paper I present a case study of a bilingual nursery school in Hackney East London where the nursery has been serving the needs of the local communities for the last twenty years. I explore how through such planned activities children's varying linguistic and cultural experiences are used as a basis for promoting language awareness, tolerance and collaboration through the Foundation Stage Curriculum (QCA, 2000). As argued in this paper in the preschool context this is crucial for children's social and emotional development.

There are many interpretations of what is to be regarded as the 'fundamentals' of citizenship education. This phenomenon was explored from different perspectives by various studies. In fact this is one of the aspects which make the study of citizenship education inherently interesting. Some educators would agree that allowing children to exercise their right of choice in matters while learning to respect each other's freedom of choice is one of the principles of citizenship education. This is often explored within the framework of what is to be regarded as teaching of 'common values and rules'. It applies to everybody. It is inherently inclusive, allows everyone's voice to be heard and 'teaches' tolerance. Other studies argue that such principles and practices, as important as they are in promoting children's understanding of citizenship, are not entirely successful in developing their abilities as fully fledged citizens: Actively shaping their thinking to enable them to have a say in the way they are to be educated (Nielsen and Froda, 2001). It is argued that through this approach children will:

> 'Understand that democracy is not just another subject to be taught but
> (it is) a way of life' (p.41).

The focus here is that children need to live and act out the principles of democracy and be encouraged to be aware of their role as active participants, in other words 'empowered' to make decisions and take positive action. The implicit notion here is the role of adults as 'distributors of power' to encourage children to take responsibility for their actions as active members of the kindergarten. Studies that are based on similar principles of empowerment essentially see such processes as individuals' right to influence the conditions of their own life (Kjoerulff and Seminariet, 2001).

There are studies in preschool contexts which looked at children's understanding of aspects of citizenship education (Nasman and Von Gerber, 2001; Judson, 2001; Kroflic, 2003). Other related studies, although not specifically on kindergarten children focused

on aspects of participatory, collaborative and experiential learning (Folkesson and Hartsmar, 2005; Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, 2005; Sole and Freitas, 2005; Sosnina, 2005).

As mentioned above such studies focus on different aspects of citizenship. However, there are not many that focus specifically on promoting harmony in multicultural communities in preschool contexts. One such study focused on developing children's self-identity as an important aspect of citizenship education (Ross, 2001). With this model children's cultural and linguistic experiences are taken as starting points for promoting an equal and harmonious society. Here the importance of children's 'belonging and connecting' is emphasized (p. 63). In another study Kroflic (2003 a) explored the moral dimensions in promoting multicultural values in preschool children in Slovenia.

Perhaps it is useful to contextualize the above mentioned perspectives on citizenship education for multicultural societies by relating it to arguments against Piagetian thinking on young children's learning; that given the appropriate cultural and linguistic experiences, children have the ability to position themselves and relate much faster to those around them at a younger age. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of social interaction through language which as he argued influenced their conceptual understanding, Bruner (1990) reminded us of the importance of mapping out models of instruction to facilitate interaction highlighting the role of teachers as facilitators. The key focus for both was participation through a model of social interaction. The present study is set in the context of such collaborative participatory approaches to citizenship education.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study Strike's (1999) framework of 'moral pluralism' will be adopted. According to Strike:

> Moral pluralism says that moral goods are irreducibly many and often conflicting…moreover there is no grand theory in which all moral goods are synthesized, weighed and ordered.'(1999: 21)

His theory encapsulates the following aspects:

- Despite the essential differences the prevailing concepts of ethics of care, ethics of justice and ethics of virtues can be developed to promote a consistent concept of moral education.
- It is sensible to promote such methods in early childhood as these are more suited to the child's first entry to the school and therefore social interaction which would help children to reflect on ethical dilemmas.
- These are critical aspects for tolerance in multicultural settings, as the recognition of the other as different in the life of heterogeneity into early entry into ethically appropriate models of multicultural education.

Strike is not alone in his approach. Others have also supported his views on moral pluralism and the right of individuals particularly for members of different cultural,

ethnic and other minorities to have their voices heard in the worlds of majority culture (Callan, 1998:51; Noddings, 1999:14-15; Katz, 1999:73).

Citizenship Education in the British context: Multicultural education in the Pre-school.

In the UK, education of the under fives was published by the then Department for Education and Employment in the document *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (DfEE, 2000). The document clearly set out six areas of learning as *Early Learning Goals* for the Foundation Curriculum:

- Personal, social and emotional development,
- Communication language and literacy,
- Mathematical development,
- Knowledge and understanding of the world,
- Physical development,
- Creative development.

Each area clearly sets out specific learning points shown as 'stepping stones' describing children's specific actions followed by examples of what children actually do during such activities. In the corresponding column we find a list of suggestions under the heading 'what the practitioners can do' which sets out practical activities for the adults to support the action points. There is no doubt that each area is equally important for the young learner's development but for the purpose of this study let us look at one of the areas namely *Knowledge and Understanding of the World* (KUW) in more detail.

Looking through each of the stepping stones we can see suggested activities for the development of children's curiosity and manipulation of objects in their immediate environment. For example *investigating construction materials* is put as one of the stepping stones followed by an example which suggests children making play dough using a stick to shape holes in it. This is further supported by a list of suggestions for the practitioner as to what materials are to be made available for children's use. Other activities provide a framework for children to explore themselves in relation to others as young learners.

There is no doubt that such activities are useful ways of promoting the development of self-awareness in relation to others. However they fall short of specific strategies for promoting tolerance brought about by children's initial reactions to each other. Furthermore the document perceives multiculturalism purely in terms of 'adapting to the majority culture' which largely ignores the need to maintain tolerance and co-existence between different multiethnic communities. This, according to Kroflic (2003b) is a process, which encapsulates a number of steps between the adult and the child which eventually leads to the growth of social- cognitive competences:

> If the emotional blending of object and subject of care (symbiosis) is crucial for the child's development in the first months of life, the later identification with rationalized moral rules helps the child through the time of reduced emotional attachment to the authority of important

adults, encouraging the process of separation and individualism and
growth of social-cognitive competences (2000:44-84)

If we analyze Kroflic's points in the context of the present study we can see that
educating a tolerant, sensitive 'multicultural citizen' goes through stages and requires
carefully planned strategies. The following case study explores aspects of such a
practice.

Happy Day Nursery School

The Nursery school was established in 1984 to meet the growing need amongst the
Turkish speaking communities in Hackney East London to provide a community based
bilingual education. In practice this implied that children's first languages would be used
in interaction to promote related vocabulary in English to prepare children for the
English-speaking medium in mainstream schools. The funding for the school came from
Hackney Education Authority. The initial intake of the school consisted mainly of
children from Turkish speaking families. Gradually to meet the growing demand the
school began accepting children from other minority communities. This also included
children from monolingual English speaking families. The present intake consists of 20
children from eight different language communities including Turkish (7) German/
Croatian (1) Arabic (1), Vietnamese (1), Urdu (2) Yoruba (3) and Twi (1). Four children
are from monolingual English speaking backgrounds. There are four full-time bilingual
staff, three Turkish and one Yoruba speaker.

The school adopts the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (DfEE, 2000)
framework for teaching but develops this further to promote multicultural ethos through
carefully planned activities.

Research Design and Methodology

The ongoing project is a two-year ethnographic case study which began in October 2005.
Peer group interactions and adult focused individualized communication was tape
recorded at fortnightly intervals. During the first year the data was analyzed for adult
/child emotion building patterns looking at Krofic's *symbiotic* aspects followed by
enforcement of rules. These involved looking at children's attitudes to adults' authority
'as the object of identification', 'peer group interaction', 'mutual assistance' and
children's responses to 'negotiation of common rules' (Krofic, 2003:169). The data to be
collected during the second year will look for possible patterns of development of social-
cognitive competencies such as patterns of peer group cooperation, children's
interpretations of different opinions and wishes in conflict situations and discussions of
topics in the field of ethics and interpersonal relations (Krofic, 2003:169). Data
collection will be fortnightly audio tape-recorded sessions by the nursery staff as well as
participatory observations by the project team. This paper will present some of the
findings in the first six months of the project.

Teaching rules through role play and modeling

Teacher (1)	Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? Who wants to be the brown bear? (No response from the children)
Teacher (2)	I will be the brown bear.
Teacher (1)	Ok! Who wants to be a yellow duck? (Anita comes forward!)
Teacher (2)	Thank you Anita! (Encouraging the children) Yellow duck yellow duck what do you see? (Repeats it again this time some children join her)
Teacher (1)	Well done Anita, well done Ahmed, Well done Alice!
Teacher (2)	Dilara, do you want to be a purple cat?
Dilara	*Kedi* (cat)
Teacher (1)	(To children) Dilara is calling out the Turkish name for it and its *Kedi*. Shall we say it together*? Keeediii.* Cat. (Children repeat together)
Teacher (2)	*Keeedii..* Well done everyone. Cat.
Teacher (1)	Tom! What would like to be? Orange fish? Red bird? Green frog?
Tom	I want to be purple cat!
Teacher (1) you	I know Tom but today Dilara has chosen the purple cat but next time can be the purple cat! Ok? (Tom hesitates but walks towards the teacher to pick up the card with a zebra picture on it!)
Teacher (1) be	Ok Tom you chose the Zebra…Omar.. Your turn.. Would you like to the green frog?
Omar	(Pointing at the picture calls out in Arabic)
Teacher (1)	Of course it is! Listen everyone Omar is calling out the Arabic name for frog it is *dofda'a.* Can we say it together? *Dofda'a.* Yes it's frog..
Teacher (2)	Ok lets begin.. Purple cat purple cat what do you see?
Dilara	I see a green frog looking at me…

Teacher (2)　　　Well done Dilara!

This was a group role play activity aimed at teaching children animal names and their colors through modeling speech. Children learn best when they are having fun and the group was certainly doing that. The lesson had the following learning objectives:
- To practice turn taking,
- To give children opportunities to practice their right to choose within set rules,
- To actively encourage the use of children's home languages for concept building in English.

The game encouraged children to take turns and respect each other's choices. When Tom wanted to be the purple cat he was reminded that as there was only *one* available and it was already taken it would not be possible for him to have it, however the teacher promised that next time the game was played Tom would have his turn. This incident can be described as a process of 'relationship building' between the teacher and the child. The teacher having negotiated the rules to Tom needed to keep her promise in order to help the bonding process and have her authority endorsed as a 'trustworthy' adult. This is of crucial importance to building of an emotional bond between the child and the teacher. When I went along a couple of days later to observe the same activity everyone was reminded that as Tom asked to be the purple cat last time and because he couldn't have it as someone else chose it before him, he would have it as his first choice if he still wanted to. Tom went and took the purple cat. It was clear. He hadn't forgotten.

In this example the common rule was established as well as the emotional bonding between this particular child and his teacher. This was based on the principle of fairness and mutual negotiation of rules. Although it seemed to be serving the needs of one child in particular, the method of negotiation adopted was implicitly communicated to all participants who internalized such rules rapidly.

Another focus point was the openness displayed by the teachers towards the use of children's languages. Again this was done through modeling and it was reflected in children's responses. By communicating Dilara's utterance in Turkish to the rest of the group, the teacher did not only acknowledge the child's home language but also demonstrated to others the value of using their languages. The useful point to mention here is that teachers did this without necessarily having any knowledge of words in other languages. As shown in the example above it didn't take the teacher long to understand that *dofda'a* meant 'frog' in Arabic.

Parental involvement and the language potential

One of the strengths of the school is the continuing support it receives from its parents. The staff has utilized this very effectively. Parents come in regularly to work as volunteers with all the children. The school has successfully inducted these parents into their teaching programme by asking them to sit in on some chosen activities planned and delivered by one of the teachers. The key focus is teaching English concepts/vocabulary using children's community languages in simple logical steps. Parents are then asked to model similar sessions using English and the children's languages. As shown in the

following example the Turkish speaking teacher working with a group facilitates the use of both languages. These sessions are organized to support learning which usually follows whole class activities such as the example shown earlier and consists of smaller language groups. In the following sequence the children are looking at animal pictures:

Teacher	Whose turn is it? *Ne görüyorsun*? (What can you see?)
Ali	Ayı (bear)
Teacher	*Ingilizcesi neydi?* (What's that in English?)
Ali	Bear
Teacher	Aferin (Well Done). Dilara how about you? *Hangi havyanı gorüyorsun?* (Which animal can you see?)
Dilara	*Kedi…*(cat)
Teacher	*Kedileri seviyor musun*? (Do you like cats?)
Dilara friend	*Evet..bizde var. Arkadasımdır* (Yes we got one at home. She is my
Teacher	So she is your friend is she?
Dilara	Yes. She is my friend. *Beraber oynarız* (We play together)
Teacher English?)	I see.. So you play together. *Ingilizcesi neydi*? (What was it in
Dilara	Cat!
Teacher	Well Done! (Turning to another child) *Peki sen hangi hayvanı seviyorsun Hüseyin?* (What about you, which one do you like Hüseyin?
Huseyin	Zebra..

The focus is turn taking and matching concepts/vocabulary in two languages. Children are learning that there are a set of procedures involved in interacting with the teacher: One waits until ones turn comes and while the teacher is talking to one of their friends they will need to wait and listen. Teachers reminded me at the time of my observation that although children may have appeared to be following the rules naturally, this was not the case with most of them when they first arrived. Children needed to learn this particular skill. Children knew that their turn will come and the teachers would keep their promise.

One of the useful strategies that helped this process of bonding was the use of children's first languages as a starting point in interactions. Firstly it had obvious cognitive advantages. Teachers capitalized on children's first languages to develop concepts further in order to introduce appropriate English equivalents. Children as seen in the examples above formed such links fairly rapidly. Secondly, it was the *engaging* aspect of using children's first languages. Children being spoken to in their first languages immediately felt at home and responded naturally to initiations by adults. This enabled 'bonding' to develop fairly rapidly. To these children this was a natural extension of their home environments and was perhaps one of the more positive aspects of the nursery. Through careful planning (and a little bit of imagination) children had opportunities to hear their languages being spoken by adults through regularly planned activities. Here parental support for the schools needs to be commended. It was good to see the staff capitalizing on words and phrases uttered by parents and volunteers in their languages in order to maintain a high level of communication with children.

Summary

The primary focus of this paper was to explore the processes related to citizenship education in multicultural communities. For this purpose the activities of a multilingual nursery school were explored through an adult child interactional perceptive where the authority of an adult was developed through emotional bonding with children through carefully planned activities.

Children took part in loads of fun activities, songs and games which were enjoyable. From this respect the Happy Day Nursery was no different to any other Nursery in London. Perhaps it would be fair to say that it was the perception of their roles in relation to their learners' minds that may have affected the nursery staff and their approach to teaching. Although it may be a little premature to provide conclusive evidence at this stage, we can talk about some patterns that emerged from the data collected so far:

- The staff appeared to be very aware of the importance of maintaining the highest level of communication with the children in order to carry out effective teaching. The medium term and short-term plans were very much set with this aim in mind.

- The 'emotional bonding' activities discussed in this paper were perceived as an important first step towards introduction of strategies dealing with more complex aspects of dialogue in multicultural communities often shown as group conflict scenarios.

It is hoped that relevant data relating to this latter point will be collected as children progress through the second year of the project.

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