Schools for social justice and citizenship

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Abstract

This empirical paper presents some aspects of a broader study that involved different secondary schools that promote citizenship and social justice in Madrid. Various focus group interviews were conducted with students, parents, teachers and school leaders in four secondary schools. The results show that there are different leadership styles and strategies developed by educational leaders in order to promote the development of citizenship and social justice. This study shows the importance of developing a school culture more oriented to encourage and promote social justice and citizenship in order to seek the recognition of differences and reduction of all forms of discrimination and exclusion, and to achieve the full participation and learning of all students regardless of their ethnic origin, gender, social class, sexual orientation, language, or membership in a social or cultural group. We discuss the social, political and educational implications that these results have with respect to the importance of promoting schools oriented to develop social justice.

With globalization processes, migration and crisis, inequalities become more complex: gender, social class, culture, language, ability, sexual orientation may stand as reasons for exclusion. As the gap between North and South, rich and poor, native and immigrant, more capable and less capable, increases, so does sensitivity to build a more just society.

Within this, education plays a fundamental role with school seen as the basic unit of education. Perhaps gone are the days where school is viewed merely an instrument of social reproduction (Coleman, 1966; Plowden, 1969; Bourdieu and Paseron, 1972). On the one hand, school, is an instrument used by society to legitimize injustice through its power to grant and deny titles (Connell, 1997) and, on the other hand, it has proven its ability to compensate for differences in starting and contribute to social mobility.

In this context that we argue the need to promote social justice as an education concept placing it in the foreground of a political and social agenda. It is not enough that children and adolescents learn the language or mathematics, PISA reminds us; it is necessary that education contributes to building a more just society.

Theoretical Framework

Education for social justice necessarily involves some schools that work for social justice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Petrou, Angelides and Leigh, 2009). However, the term "Social Justice", in general, but especially applied to the educational environment is presented as too ambiguous and slippery (Troyna and Vincent, 1995, Fazal Rizvi, 1998; Griffiths, 2003). So, maybe we have to share with Griffiths (2003: 55) the idea of "social

justice as a verb," i.e., as a dynamic project never completed, never finished or achieved "once and for all," must always be subject to reflection and improvement.

In essence, three concepts are the basis for Social Justice (Gerwitz, 2001, 2002): Distribution (Marx, 1906, Rawls 1971, Sen, 2010), Recognition (Collins, 1991; Cole, 2000, Irvine, 2003; Fraser , 2005) and participation (Miller, 1999; Bell, 1997; Hartnett, 2001, Lee and Hipolito-Delgado, 2007). The first focuses on material and cultural resources distribution; the second, in the recognition and cultural respect of each and everyone; the existence of just relationships in society, and the third refers to the participation in decisions affecting their own lives, that is, ensuring that people are able to have an active and equal participation in society. In the distribution approach, we also have different views depending on which is distributed: Primary Goods (Rawls, 1971), Resources (Dworkin, 2000) or Capabilities (Sen, 2010).

This study takes the social justice concept based on Amartya Sen thoughts (1985, 2010) and redistribution of responsibilities, coupled with Nancy Fraser ideas (2003, 2008) and defines recognition and participation as complementary. Thus, distribution, recognition and participation would be the basis of our proposal. Sen considers the necessity of promoting equality of capabilities, i.e. those skills and potential to be or do, is to agree on how to ensure access to goods and services (goods) that make it possible, while mechanisms and processes that allow transforming them into "ways of being or doing." Education plays a fundamental role. But it reflects and promotes this kind of equality in a democratic society. Education is also reducing fragmentation and weakening of social ties, and this challenge is determining the recognition and full and equal participation of individuals from their cultural features and group characteristics, as Fraser proposed, only then, giving priority to justice for any particular conception of the goods to be distributed. From this perspective, justice is the principal and essential virtue for all social institutions and must prevail over other principles or criteria. Through this social justice could regulate inequalities for progressing towards more just and democratic societies.

To achieve this, how school works "in and for" Social Justice needs to be rethought, to be redefined and to be reformulate, in its many aspects for contributing to reach a more just society. Research has focused on the need to transform the teaching process (eg Bigelow, 1994; Ayers, Hunt and Quinn, 1998, Baker et al., 2004; Banks, 2004; Kroll, 2005; Reason, 2005, Collins 2008), modify teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2009, Irving, 2010; Nieto, 2010), change leadership (Marshall and Olivia, 2006; Ryan, 2006; Gaitanis, Normore, and Brooks, 2008; Murillo, Krichesky, Castro& Hernández-Castilla, 2010), but basically transform the school as a whole (Applebaum, 2004; Stevenson, 2007, Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Petrou, Angelides and Leigh, 2009).

Thus, international research (e.g. Pitt, 1998; Thrupp, 1999; Lupton, 2005; Enterline et al., 2008) has identified some elements that characterize the schools performance and the organization that work for social justice. Some of them are as follows:

- have shared goals by the community focused in the development of all students and the works towards Social Justice;
- Have a curriculum focused on educating the student as a member of a socially

organized and includes its elements visible in all matters related to gender, culture, equity and ethnicity;

- Maintains high expectations and provides learning opportunities for all students and teachers;
- Provides opportunities for socially responsible innovation creativity and aesthetics;
- it is concerned with welfare issues;
- it encourages critical thinking in a democratic society;
- Provides opportunities for negotiation with students, parents and other organizations;
- involves the parents and the school community;
- Share experiences with other schools and their environment;
- has support teaching strategies to conflict;
- It is concerned with providing better planning of extracurricular activities and, as far as possible, finance;
- Values cultural, linguistic and experiences that students and families bring to school;
- There are teachers who advocate change and engage with it, and
- Considers teaching as an activity that is related to the assumptions and beliefs of teachers about race, gender, disability and culture.
- Teaching as an activity that is related to the teachers' assumptions and beliefs about race, gender, disability and culture.

Culture is a principal element. The values and principles governing the school Social Justice and constitute the special culture are (Harris and Chapman, 2002; Muijs et al., 2007):

a) Integrity and honesty;
b) Fairness and equity;
c) Promoting respect for all individuals;
d) Recognition that all students are entitled to an education based on equality of opportunity;
e) Concern for the teachers and students welfare and development;
f) Belief that all students can learn;
g) The conviction that the school must meet the needs of each student;
h) The students point of view is important and considered, and
i) Consideration of the difference as a learning opportunity and a source of enrichment.

Objectives

- Understanding the school culture of secondary schools working" in and for" Social Justice.
- Determine the process factors in Secondary Schools working "in and for "Social Justice.
- Describe the values and beliefs system expressed in their actions, rules and

behaviour themselves and in their cultural products (symbols, rituals, languages), the Secondary Schools working "in and for" Social Justice.

- Interpret the School Community attitudes and behaviours in Secondary Schools working "in and for" Social Justice.

Methodology

In order to deepen understanding of schools' culture working "in and for" Social Justice, we developed case studies of an instrumental nature, through an ethnographic approach complemented by a biographical-narrative approach to study different teachers life stories.

In a second phase we will develop a thorough study of four secondary education institutes located in highly heterogeneous in socio-economic and cultural development of students in the previous phase have been detected with greater involvement Social Justice.

Some of the categories of analysis for the study are:

- Students and teachers characteristics.
- Customs, rules and norms of behaviour themselves and in their cultural outcomes: symbols, rituals and languages of their own.
- School decision-making process and division of powers.
- Relationship between the school community and teamwork.
- Values and expectations for students.
- Leadership teachers and distributed leadership.
- Positions in cultural, linguistic and experiences that students and families bring to school.
- School Attitudes to become a Professional Learning Community.
- Teachers' attitudes toward school, commitment and sense of belonging and involvement.
- School authority on performance and school success.
- Opening to other communities and schools.
- Families Attitudes to the School.

The participants have been: the Management Team, Head of Department, teachers, Parents Association, and student representatives. The research seeks to have as complete a School picture of its culture as possible. By special life stories will be four teachers in each school with more experience and commitment to social justice.

The qualitative techniques imply the use of multiples elements, including the researcher's perspective, role theory and negotiated with the participants and the way in which relations are established with the researcher over time (Metz, 2000), with

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information collected through the following strategies:

- Non-participant observation undertaken by researchers at the school dynamics and culture;
- Semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders involved: the Head Teacher, heads of department, responsible for AMPA;
- Teachers Questionnaires aimed at teachers focused on different aspects related to school management;
- Focus groups. Four focus groups, two with parents and two with students;
- Life Stories;
- Document analysis: Education Project, Plan of Coexistence, Internal Regulations and existing innovation projects.

The stay in the "set" has been held at least two months continuously, so as to give, as close as possible, deep insight into school culture. After staying at the "stage" field a report for each feature has been discussed with the various representatives of the school to validate the information gathered.

At the set the following tasks have been done:

- Specific definition of micro objectives at each Secondary School.
- Summaries.
- Processing systems analysis categories.
- Digitization and preparation of material.
- Delimitation of the segments of audio and video recording (Transana).
- Written analysis of multimodal (NVivo9).
- Text mapping (AtlasTi).
- Preparation of summary and conclusions from the data obtained in the qualitative research process.
- Integrating quantitative and qualitative results.
- Final Report.

Analysis follows 3 steps:

- Community level as the unit of analysis: to analyze the contributions of participants and use "summary" to integrate the different descriptions and situations in educational research.
- Level of interpersonal relationships: special attention to the speech in terms of thematic unity in the talks to continue in the focus groups. At this level, qualitative and quantitative analyses foresee.
- Personal level: it will track individuals as the unit of analysis. The speech and its evolution over immersion in the setting.

Results

Here we present results from one of the studied schools: "Palomeras" is a Primary School that has been chosen because its forty years working towards Social Justice. All talk about it. It is open to the neighbourhood as a first sign of identity, which is reflected even in the school fencing, brick halfway up and the rest a gate that lets you see what goes on inside and vice versa. Although it could be seen as anecdotic, the fact of being in the neighbourhood of Vallecas, an old neighbourhood, with a politically engaged working population, mostly makes their vocation of public school and dealing with diversity a priority.

Numerous practices have been observed and analyzed at this school. One of the School priorities, felt by teachers and students is how it values the social aspect, or as they say "human" characteristic are the most important. Perhaps one of the first statements is that the main concern of the school is that diversity is welcome with priority to care for those most in need.

This way of working is by dialogue to reach a consensus so that all opinions are taken into account. Many actions are intended to collect the participation of members of the educational community, for example, students meet every early Monday in the Assembly: where conflicts are resolved, tasks are distributed to students, which also carry responsibility and commitment. They also have a weekly participation that integrates all students in a "Standing Board" attended by two students from each class in order to resolve possible conflicts between different courses, and to adopt solutions proposed.

The students maintain clear participation channels but also with the families, many of whom are deeply integrated through a range of activities: first, the School organizes to host sessions for new families, but they also screened for possible needs and to establish preventive measures. The participation actions are abundant. Some of them are casual in nature and host parties, participation in party committees and events some of them are pedagogical or with management purpose. It facilitates contact with families using relationship with tutors, including, for example, flexible schedules allow working parents to attend meetings.

A second critical element is that management of conflict is understood as a way of learning that has, in the immediate term, priority over curricular knowledge. The School aims to work consistently in all areas. For example, encouraging non-sexist language, to respond to unique diversity and living it as an enriching element. Students are aware that everyone is different and valued. They know that some have more needs and are encouraged to know and help them and make their life easier.

In addition to participation, the school philosophy goes further in seeking to achieve equality of opportunities and equity. One of the most significant practices in this regard is the Cooperative. It involves all families in the school for a fee that is determined at the beginning of course depending on the needs and proposed by the teachers. This will address costs such as the material is in the classroom, field trips and activities. All students have the same material and it is available to all of them. It keeps track of spending. The material used in the classroom does not focus exclusively on the development of teaching activities scheduled by the textbook, but this is another

resource. But its way to work transcends other practices that make visible this way of understanding education. For example, students in their access to classrooms do not line-up in rows but rather are responsible for arriving to class on time and to enter the classroom with confidence.

The leadership defined by the Head Teacher, is the whole group of teachers. It is clear for the principal's team, as for teachers, students and parents. It is a task of collegiality in which the teachers support all decisions. This process takes place in the "cluster" basis on the school needs and personal projects of its members. In fact, in their statements, it is more valued mentoring a students' group than to be the principal, as being a role of greater responsibility. This role is felt as a more collaborative exercise in the school. The principal's decisions are based on consensus and through dialogue the agreement is reached. Therefore, except minor decisions that must be taken with immediacy, the headmaster voice is just one more. It provides, in some cases more information on the performance of their representative functions. So much collegial tasks are distributed through a quadrant and are conducted by teachers who have spare time and take responsibility for them (So the additional remuneration for management is shared by teachers and used in activities that contribute to the cohesion of teachers).

The management team shares the school vision and an educational philosophy with the educational community. It is the enthusiasm of the team and their commitment that is present at school. This kind of approach has been consolidated over 40 years and it remains the institution over time despite changes in the management group. The mission is kept. The management training is addressed as a part of its commitment to the school but also the attendance at certain representative meetings. Both students and parents are not able to clearly differentiate their tasks and their perception of direction is defined as "a common teacher". All the tasks and the school activity are steeped by this philosophy. People live as a belief, even repeatedly mentions the term "sect". It is a compact and cohesive where new members are integrated.

Lessons Learned

One of the main lessons learned is that the school is perceived as an educational school community where they work together, with teamwork emphasised in all areas as an essential part of school culture. It means addressing tasks through teamwork, reaching consensus and supported by peers and families. They work together, collaborating.

A second element that appears consistently in all the interviews and focus groups is how to address conflicts. Dialogue is a key element in the relationship of the various members of the educational community and the educational community. It begins in kindergarten with "Assemblies" that are maintained throughout the school. Here, as in other bodies, representative conflict resolution is an educational strategy. The example and the implicit curriculum are carried out through behaviours rather than meaningless speeches or documents. This experience teaches them to defend and to hold themselves, to defend themselves with words, to reflect, to engage, all that work, is a key strategy.

The priorities and core values are seen by the whole community from children, to

families and undoubted by teachers. It is one of the elements that teachers from other schools or beginners that their attention to every student. They teach new teachers how to talk with them, listen to them. Participation is this basic principle in Education Project cuts across all the areas and members of the educational community. Each small business brings with it a working group or committee, the working procedure in the classroom, the interaction between different groups and levels, families; everything is designed by and for the participation and integration of all its members. The parents are involved in government departments so they can hear and be heard in decision-making processes.

The families' participation, for example, is experienced by headmaster and by teachers as enrichment in school life. They are not strange but part of the school framework. In fact in the parents focus group the school seemed not to be the teachers but of the parents. But then we read that does not squeak this collaboration of families with the educational process but rather is experienced as a benefit.

These educational practices for social justice involving a new conception of the leadership, of teaching methodology, about the channels of participation, families involvement, the perception of difference, about conflict resolution strategies, time devoted to academic tasks not explicitly, although training does not spoil the learning process more conventional.

We conclude with a vision of the school's enthusiastic and optimistic. The management team and the community adopt this way of looking at school translated as a teaching philosophy, but mainly as a philosophy of life. They can transmit this utopia so communicate enthusiasm and faith in their educational practices as an element that transforms society and contributes to social justice.

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