

EDITORIAL

Towards education for diversities?

Fred Dervin^{*}, Regis Machart[†] & Julie Byrd Clark[‡]
University of Helsinki, Finland; Universiti Putra Malaysia; Western University (Canada)
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Something is happening in research fields related to notions such as the 'intercultural', 'multicultural', 'transcultural', etc. An increasing number of researchers and practitioners appear to be less and less satisfied with the state of affairs: the way phenomena related to self and other are conceptualised, the research methods that are used to examine these phenomena, the positions of the researcher and practitioner. It appears that these notions are coming under greater scrutiny today.

This new research journal, *The International Journal of Education for Diversities* (IJE4D), represents an attempt to contribute to these discussions in a coherent, ethical and critical manner. The geographical and linguistic spaces represented by the editors and editorial and scientific boards cover most continents and over 20 languages. The use of the word diversity in the plural in the name of the journal is a way to position our practices outside of the notions aforementioned. Of course, the concept of diversity is also contested as it is used increasingly in research and politics to only refer to the other, especially the immigrant in e.g. Europe. In this journal, diversity in the plural sends the following message: everyone is diverse; there is no 'politically correct' hierarchy between those who are constructed as diverse (the immigrants, the other) and those who are perceived as 'normal', 'mainstream', 'local', etc. By deconstructing this hierarchy, we want to promote the idea that anyone can experience the same issues in education, at macro, meso and micro levels, regardless of their 'origins'. Of course there are those who are in dominating positions and those who are not but even the dominant can experience rejection, discrimination and stereotyping – because of one specific identity marker constructed by her/him and others, e.g. sexual, religious identities. It might be easier for her/him to defend her/himself depending on the context and interlocutors of course. We believe that empowerment of the less powerful individuals can take place through de-establishing these hierarchies: for example noticing that the other, the dominant also go through similar processes but for other reasons can contribute to empowerment. We dream of studies where e.g. the bullying of the dominant is compared to the bullying of immigrants.

* Email: fred.dervin@helsinki.fi

† Email: rmachart@fbmk.upm.edu.my

‡ Email: jbyrdcla@uwo.ca

The aim of IJE4D is thus to publish articles about *diversities* in many and varied contexts and in relation to different identity markers (religion, gender, social class, etc.) and their intersections. In so doing, we move beyond Puwar's criticism (2004: 1): "the language of diversity is today embraced as a holy mantra across different sites. We are told that diversity is good for us. It makes for an enriched multicultural society". For IJE4D, everybody is multicultural.

In setting up the journal, we had a clear agenda in mind:

- the rejection of (neo-)culturalism or (neo-)essentialism (relying only on e.g. national or ethnic cultures to explain what people do and think; or "invoking the magical power of some allegedly predominant identity (that) drowns other affiliations" (Sen, 2006: xv);
- the denunciation of the smuggling in of the old, ideological and contested concept of culture (Prashad, 2011)
- the avoidance of the injustice, unfair treatment and 'hierarchization' of self and other (Dervin, 2012; Byrd Clark, 2009; Machart et al., 2013).

Instead we wish to promote a more 'liquid' (Bauman, 2004), co-constructivist and critical approach to diversities in education. This entails:

- Criticality towards the concepts and notions we use – researchers and practitioners are also social beings who can demonize or promote self and other;
- Hyper-reflexivity and accountability from researchers and practitioners – and transparency in terms of meaning-making and decision-making in writing research;
- A systematic inclusion of the importance of language in doing research and writing about it (questions of translation; co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants, intersubjectivity) – bearing in mind Shi-xu's claim that "language and communication are a joint social activity that is embedded in a broader cultural and historical and by implication unequal-power context and that, more particularly, current intercultural communication is itself part of the globalized competition, mass human migration, unending local conflict and hostility, where social injustice and alienation are the order of the day" (2001: 280);
- A discussion of power relations in education for diversities;
- Data collection that can reflect 'complexity' in better ways (focus groups, critical participation-observations, cyberanthropology, art, etc.);
- Data analysis that goes beyond the 'surface' of what people say.

The originality of the journal is also to publish articles from the general field of education but also from that of intercultural communication education and language education, thus combining conceptual, theoretical and methodological achievements in these separate yet very much related fields of knowledge.

This first issue contains seven research articles and one postscript. The following spaces are covered: Australia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, and the USA.

The first three articles deal with participation of diversities in schools (Australia, Iceland and the USA). In the first article, **Alicia Miguel** and **Barbara N. Martin** examine the leadership behavior and actions of a principal and the involvement of parents in a North-American urban school. **Hanna Ragnarsdóttir**, in a case study about leadership and participation in Icelandic compulsory schools and preschools,

shows that immigrant teachers participate actively in decision-making and in developing the schools in Iceland. The next article, written by **Sylvia Buchori** and **Toni Dobinson** is entitled *Cultural diversity in the early childhood classroom in Australia: Educators' perspectives and practices*. The authors explore the perceptions about cultural diversity and the pedagogic practices of a staff of early childhood educators. Unlike the previous articles, they find that the teachers see diversities as a burden and fear that their students might fall below curriculum standards.

The next article, by **Nektaria Palaiologou**, presents a more macro-approach to education for diversities by examining educational policies on Intercultural Education in Greece, from a diachronic perspective. The author also compares the practices in this country with what has been implemented some other countries in South Europe.

The next three articles are situated within intercultural communication education, e.g. fields outside education that teach about diversities (Dervin & Tournebise, 2012). All the articles are set in the Nordic country of Finland, which is increasingly popular with international and exchange students and has a determined approach to internationalisation of education. In *Enhancing intercultural learning through the exchange student experience: Insights from Hanken School of Economics (Finland)*, **Martin Fougère** and **Beata Segercrantz** report on a course that aims to support intercultural learning in exchange experiences through an alternative approach to the 'intercultural'. In her contribution, **Céline Tournebise** examines the different types of courses on intercultural communication on offer at Finnish universities. She also discusses the discourses of practitioners whom she interviewed about the topic. Her results show inconsistency and contradictions in the way intercultural communication education takes place in this context. The last research article reports on an intercultural course in teaching interpreting. The authors, **Stuart D von Wolff** and **Anu Viljanmaa**, explore the problems encountered when devising intercultural exercises, how interpreting students experience authentic interpreting situations, and their thoughts on identity.

The famous French 'interculturalist' **Martine Abdallah-Preteille** concludes the first issue of IJE4D with a postscript that presents her approach to diversities and that she calls "A Humanism of the Diverse".

We hope that this first issue of the journal provides the reader with good snapshots of what IJE4D intends to bring to the field of education. We look forward to continuing working on this venture. Should readers wish to submit ideas for the future (e.g. a special issue), please do contact us!

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