

**EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AND
PRACTICES FROM THE MAJORITY WORLD**

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

ETHNOCENTRISM IN EDUCATION AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT

PIERRE R. DASEN AND ABDELJALIL AKKARI

The primary purpose of this book is to draw attention to ethnocentrism in educational research and practice, and to suggest some means to fight it wherever it manifests itself. Ethnocentrism is a universal psychological process: everyone, everywhere, tends to believe that there is only one best way to do things and to view the world—his or her own. This tendency is particularly strong in the social sciences, because they have been developed mainly in a single cultural context, the Western world. Psychology, for example, is very much enculturated in the middle class, industrial societies of North America and Europe (Dasen, 1993), and therefore, strongly reflects their individualist, competitive values. Cross-cultural psychology in its various forms (including cultural psychology and indigenous psychology) represents an attempt to counteract this ethnocentrism (Berry et al., 2002; Segall et al., 1999). Its impact on general or mainstream psychology is, however, minimal.

The field of education is no exception in the prevalence of ethnocentrism. Whether we consider it from the point of view of educational theory and research ('educational sciences', as they are called in some languages, such as, French) or in terms of pedagogy, that is, educational policies and practices, most of the discourse is strongly marked by one single model, Western schooling, or what Serpell and Hatano (1997: 362) have called the 'hegemonic imposition of

Institutionalized Public Basic Schooling (IPBS)'. This model has become so widely accepted throughout the world that it is, in fact, very often no longer seen as Western.

Yet, educational sciences and pedagogy, as part of human and social sciences, have historically been marked by an elitist, inegalitarian perspective on the non-Western world. Scientific knowledge about education is typically seen as Western and, if anything, non-Western contexts are only the objects of study upon which Western paradigms of inquiry are imposed. This intellectual posture is reinforced by the persistent European belief of bearing a civilizing mission, which consists in replacing supposed archaisms by modernity.

In many scholarly fields, this cultural imperialism is usurpatory in two ways. On the one hand, the non-Western cultural heritage is plundered (for example, the knowledge of traditional medicine is used by pharmaceutical multinational companies), and on the other hand, the right to produce scientific knowledge of a universal nature is denied to non-Western people. The French Observatory of Science and Technology (OST, 2002) recently showed that sub-Saharan Africa, which contains 10 per cent of the world's population, produces only 0.4 per cent of the world's research and development. In the same vein, the trend for museums to separate 'primary' art (not to say 'primitive') from 'contemporary' art (exclusively Western!) shows such pernicious reasoning. The objective of this book is to breach this double usurpation.

Contemporary pedagogy and educational sciences have mainly been developed in the industrialized societies of Europe and North America, which has given them a specific cultural character. In this book we will examine the conceptual contribution of formal and informal educational methods of the 'majority world' (to be defined subsequently). These methods existed before the importation of Western educational formats during the colonial period. They continue to provide original solutions to educational problems in many parts of the world. Thus the goal of this book is to carry out a cultural decantation, on the one hand, by exposing the ethnocentrism of educational sciences (Akkari, 2000), and on the other hand, by showing what advantages could be derived from taking into account the contributions of educational methods in other cultural contexts.

In disciplinary terms, the role of the king's fool, pointing out the weaknesses of the dominant paradigms and the attractiveness

of alternatives, belongs to anthropology of education insofar as it deals with education as all forms of cultural transmission, including the various social institutions invented in different cultures for this purpose. Comparative education sometimes partakes of this endeavour, as long as it is not confined to government statistics about IPBS systems. Most of the authors in this volume share an interest in anthropology and the comparative method, within a more general multidisciplinary outlook.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'MAJORITY WORLD'?

Kagitçibasi (1996) rightly remarked that rich, industrialized nations, geographically of the West and North, are in fact in the minority when one looks at population; hence the term 'majority world'. Of course, it is in fact practically a synonym of 'non-Western' that we have used so far in this text, but its facetiousness has the advantage of challenging, in itself, Western ethnocentrism. In French, 'North and South' are the current way to demarcate the dichotomy, since it has become politically incorrect to speak of 'the Third World' or of 'developing countries'. Even though the latter are indeed located mainly in the inter-tropical regions, that is, in the 'South' of Europe, the term does not have so much a geographical as a metaphorical meaning; it is in fact an euphemism used to refer to poorer countries (the designation chosen by Herzog, this volume), and is easily applied also to underprivileged segments of the population in rich countries.

There is no easy solution to this conundrum in terminology, each word being likely to be misinterpreted. In fact, we believe that any dichotomy that produces a 'great divide' (Segall et al., 1999: 132) is an oversimplification, and should be avoided. Yet we do need a term to designate our field of interest.

The notion of the 'majority world' in this book dealing with education designates educational ideas, theories, and methods considered to be outside of 'mainstream' formal schooling mentioned above as IPBS. Thus we will discuss informal or traditional education, and also formal institutions of instruction often linked to various religions throughout the world, as well as innovations that attempt to make formal schooling culturally more appropriate. In many countries, be they rich or poor, the term 'majority world' may refer to indigenous populations that have been pushed, through socio-economic and

cultural pressure, into becoming minorities (whatever their number), and now have specific educational needs.

Educational methods of the majority world

If we wish to speak of educational methods from the 'majority world', then which educators should we hear from? Who do we have in place of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Ferrière, Montessori or even Piaget or Vygotsky? In fact, there are not many famous educators from the 'majority world'. Why is this? Is it due to the culture of oral transmission, which does not formalize theory? Or, in cultures with written traditions, is it due to the fact that such educators write in Chinese, Hindi or Arabic and may never have been translated into European languages or whose translations are little known? This might explain things partially. The main explanation, however, certainly comes from elsewhere. Unlike educational ideas from the North, which generally come from theorists who work as individuals, ideas of the 'majority world' are often advocated by a community or by larger social institutions:

Perhaps the closest one can get to describing unity in Indigenous Knowledge is that knowledge is the expression of the vibrant relationships between the people, their ecosystems, and the other living beings and spirits that share their lands. These multi-layered relationships are the basis for maintaining social, economic and diplomatic relationships—through sharing—with other peoples. (Battiste and Henderson, 2000: 42)

Thus, in informal education, it is the entire community that becomes educator. This undoubtedly corresponds with a collectivistic orientation of the society rather than an individualistic one (Kagitçibasi, 1997), even if this dichotomy is certainly over-interpreted as a cultural explanation (Berry et al., 2002), just like any great divide theory. In the format of traditional religious schools (covered in several chapters of this volume), education is entrusted to specialists, but these specialists do not attempt to create educational theory with the goal of changing the system. Traditional pedagogy of the majority world is more related to socio-cultural reproduction rather than social change.

Certain educational theorists of the 'majority world', Freire (Akkari, this volume) and Boal (Hemma Devries, 2004) in particular, were heavily influenced by theorists of the North (Mesquida, 2004). The same could be said for Mariategui (1970), a Peruvian educational theorist, whose critical orientation came from Marxism. As for Krishnamurti, who wrote several books on education (Krishnamurti, 1966, 1974, 1985), it is through studies in England that he developed his original hybridization between Indian philosophy and social revolutionary criticism. Also, it was to schools in the North that he sent letters and it was mainly these northern schools that applied his ideas. Drawing thus from Indian philosophy, he envisaged a global education that would integrate the cognitive and the spiritual:

The function of education is to create human beings who are integrated and therefore intelligent. We may take degrees and be mechanically efficient without being intelligent. Intelligence is not mere information; it is not derived from books.... Education should help us to discover lasting values so that we do not merely cling to formulas or repeat slogans. (Krishnamurti, 1966: 14)

But, at the same time, he was against all state institutions and all religious dogma, and this would have been hard to imagine if he had never left his homeland. Here are some excerpts that illustrate this revolutionary position:

Government control of education is a calamity. There is no hope of peace and order in the world as long as education is the handmaid of the State or of organized religion.... This conditioning of the child's mind to fit a particular ideology, whether political or religious, breeds enmity between man and man (p. 77)... Education throughout the world has failed, it has produced mounting destruction and misery. Governments are training the young to be the efficient soldiers and technicians they need (p. 80)... All sovereign governments must prepare for war, and one's own government is no exception. To make its citizens efficient for war, to prepare them to perform their duties effectively, the government must obviously control and dominate them. They must be educated to act as machines, to be ruthlessly efficient (p. 81)... The sovereign State does not want its citizens to be free, to think for themselves, and it controls them through propaganda, through distorted historical interpretations, and so on. That is why education is becoming more and more a means of teaching *what* to think and not *how* to think.

If we were to think independently of the prevailing political system, we would be dangerous; free institutions might turn out pacifists or people who think contrary to the régime. (Krishnamurti, 1966: 80–81)

This quotation from Krishnamurti could easily have come from the pen of Illich (1972, 1973) or of Freire (1970), even if, overall, his educational philosophy is more spiritual than political. Taking into account the whole student means reflecting on life's fundamental questions and on what unites us as human beings beyond our personal and cultural differences (Ferrer and Allard, 2002).

Other educational theorists of the 'majority world' combine their local traditional knowledge with outside influences connected with development and international cooperation in education. This is an encouraging educational syncretism that assumes that education is neither completely alienating nor completely liberating. The potential effects of education always depend upon its local cultural rootedness.

In northern societies, mass educated for over a century, knowledge acquisition naturally refers to the IPBS model: 'Since the school's mission is to instruct, from the most elementary to the highest level, the definition of what we mean by "knowledge" goes hand in hand with today's universally shared experience of schooling' (Chartier and Jacquet-Francillon, 1998: 6).

If anthropologists have long described the existence of knowledge collectively transmitted from generation to generation in societies without schools or even without a written culture, IPBS has always looked on out-of-school knowledge with great suspicion:

Knowledge derived from traditional practices, transmitted by 'seeing and doing' as well as 'hearing and telling', can only be questionable or condemnable, mixing up indistinguishably rites and myths, beliefs and superstitions, magic formulas and everyday routines. Against this archaic form of knowledge, imposed by an arbitrary, authoritarian tradition, knowledge from the republican school was set up to be the knowledge of liberating modernity: Enlightenment knowledge against obscurantist beliefs, scientific knowledge against empirical practices, secular knowledge versus religious dogma, urban knowledge versus rural folklore, knowledge from reason and progress versus irrational and backward-looking traditions. (Chartier and Jacquet-Francillon, 1998: 6)

Contrary to this Manichean view of knowledge, the synthesis attempted by educational theorists of the 'majority world' aims to weaken the belief that equates knowledge exclusively with schooling. Furthermore, an analysis of educational processes in contexts where the hegemony of the school format is not complete allows one to see that this institution, from its very inception, has had serious problems with cultural differences. By ignoring differences and at the same time practising discrimination, formal schooling has not necessarily carried the ideals of enlightenment.

A CRITIQUE OF SCHOOLING

It is inevitable for us to take a critical position towards the Western school model that was exported during the colonial period, and that became on a planetary scale the hegemonic institution of IPBS. (Serpell and Hatano, 1997). This school has played, and continues to play, a very ambiguous role, and for this reason can be presented either as a panacea that will bring development and peace throughout the world or as an unprecedented catastrophe. Long considered the ideal solution for the integration of cultural minorities, for social mobility, and for development, the IPBS format can no longer refuse to critically examine itself and to dissect its own ethnocentrism.

Perhaps the first person to have voiced a critical analysis was Nyerere (1967), president of Tanzania and himself a teacher. Nyerere realized that in his newly independent country, a school system keeping the colonial model, established to provide mainly local administrative personnel, continued to create a privileged 'elite' for the 'modern' sector, to the exclusion of the majority of the rural population. Most students would quit school with a feeling of failure, as the system was entirely oriented towards higher-level studies, being highly selective at the same time. The students, after only two or three years of primary school, felt themselves superior to their non-educated peers, and would refuse agricultural work, preferring to wait for an illusory job in the city. Thus the school system was the primary cause of rural exodus and widening generation gap.

Throughout the last decades of the 20th century, these criticisms were restated and elaborated by different theorists (Carnoy, 1974; Carnoy and Samoff, 1990; Erny, 1977; Hallak, 1974; Malassis, 1975; Mukene, 1988), who raised the suspicion that school education

does not automatically bring about economic development, contrary to what was predicted by human capital theory. On the other hand, historically, it was this colonial school that allowed the emergence of an organized opposition to colonial control. This would eventually lead to independence under the direction of Western educated leaders such as Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia or Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya.

On the positive side, it is often mentioned—and this is certainly the majority view defended by organizations such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—that schooling allows for the promotion of hygiene and public health, lowering of birth rate (Cochrane, 1979), improvement of the status of women (Kagitçibasi, 1996, 1998), and respect for democracy and human rights.

Further, as Dasen (this volume) shows in his chapter, research in cross-cultural psychology has found that schooling, more than literacy itself, has an effect on cognitive functioning. This comes about not through the production of new cognitive processes, but through the emphasis on a 'theoretic' cognitive style: schooling trains students to accept working on content that is distanced from everyday life. However, there are different types of schools: Mishra and Dasen (2004), reviewing research on the cognitive effects of schooling in India, mention the importance of considering factors such as school quality.

This raises the question of the cultural appropriateness of schools as they currently exist throughout the world. The detour through studying differences in educational practices should allow us, wherever we are, to look closely at our own educational institutions and their degree of sensitivity to the cultural diversity of their students. Innovations in devising culturally appropriate education for indigenous populations, such as reported by Gasché (1998, 2004) and in some chapters of this volume (Battiste, Gajardo et al., Mishra, Teasdale), may exist at the heart of pedagogical alternatives in the face of the world education crisis.

Nevertheless, this book intends to go beyond a simple criticism of school. There is only Herzog (this volume) to suggest that we would be better off, at least for certain adolescents in certain contexts, by completely getting rid of this institution. Most of the proposed approaches consist in adapting and transforming schools so that they better respond to the needs and aspirations of local populations.

A FEW INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS

In recent reflections on the cultural adaptation of schooling, new concepts have emerged such as 'appropriation', 'empowerment', 'community of practice', 'ethnotheories', and 'conscientization', all of which may contribute to a pedagogical alternative to the hegemony of IPBS. Concepts of 'ownership' and 'appropriation' are used by Teasdale (this volume) in a way that goes beyond simple material possession: educational actions need to be conceived in a way that the people concerned can appropriate and use them actively. These concepts then are strongly linked to those of participation and identification, that can be illustrated by Teasdale's injunction to give control over the curriculum to the local community, or what Serpell (1993) referred to as 'local accountability', the fact that the school needs to be accountable to the local population rather than to central institutions like ministries of education.

An important concept in anthropology of education is the 'hidden curriculum', alongside the formal curriculum (content, teaching methods and goals, measures for initial and continuing teacher training); schools transmit unwillingly and unconsciously a series of attitudes and values. Students learn, for example, which questions are legitimate and which are not. This hidden curriculum includes implicit rules of educational communication and school life, which are imposed by dominant social groups (Apple, 1990). The school conveys implicit values through the selection of subject matters and the organization of streaming, teacher recruitment and training policies, and the conceptualization of learning. The hidden curriculum represents what is actually being done, rather than what is stated in policy documents (Gatto, 1991; Roegiers, 1997).

The concept of a 'community of practice' refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build up knowledge. In Lave and Wenger's work (1990), the learner's position within a social setting is conceptualized as a movement from 'peripheral participation' to the 'centre' of a community of shared meanings. Also, the development of the concept of 'situated learning' has led to a new look at informal learning and traditional knowledge, in the 'majority world' (Akkari, this volume) as well as in the North (Herzog, this volume). Effective learning processes are

not unique to schools, but can also take place in real-life contexts, through social interaction and collaboration (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Segall et al., 1999).

The concept of 'ethnotheory' comes from anthropology and refers to what the members of a community, in particular parents and teachers, feel, think, and know about educational processes (Akkari, 2000; Dasen, this volume). It may represent an alternative to Eurocentric objectivism, which is based on logic and rationalism and reflects how a minority of the world's population perceives the world and gives it a partial and biased view (Battiste and Henderson, 2000).

The Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire widely disseminated the concept of 'conscientization' in the fields of education and training (Akkari, this volume). To explain his educational theory, Freire (1970) presented the pedagogy of the oppressors as a 'banking' conception, where the teacher controls knowledge and the truth and the student is a simple recipient. This common conception, overwhelmingly shared by IPBS, is oppressive in the sense that students are considered to be empty vessels that need to be filled, without ever being given the tools necessary for a critical understanding of the world. Freire's alternative model is based on a real exchange between students and teachers, to the point where these roles become interchangeable. The students are considered to be individuals endowed with a conscience, and the task of education is to give them the means to appropriate knowledge. Freire's pedagogy of conscientization does not take place in a vacuum, but occurs through action, aimed at developing the students' ability to raise issues related to their surroundings and to the oppression under which they suffer. The trend of critical pedagogy, inspired by the writings of Freire, is currently at the centre of educational debates in North America, especially about multicultural education (Akkari, 2001; Freire, 1997).

Freire's conscientization comes close to the concept of 'empowerment' (Akkari and Perez, 2000). In the framework of an educational project, empowerment consists of increasing the capabilities and the means of underprivileged persons to act upon the context in which they are living. The development of empowerment in such a project requires that the people involved understand the context of their life and the disparities to which they are subjected, in terms of the distribution of knowledge, power, and resources.

Conscientization and empowerment necessarily lead to control by local communities of the educational institutions that serve them.

But the task is not an easy one because of the social evolutionary conceptions that have long prevailed concerning the development of countries in the 'majority world'. Today it is the concept of 'globalization', the present version of so-called modernization, which ensures the economic and cultural domination of one part of the world over another (Marín, this volume), and scholars from both the North and the 'majority world' must work together to decide on new educational objectives as alternatives to neo-liberal globalization (Hickling-Hudson, 2006; Marín and Dasen, 2007).

The military, political, and economic domination of the nations and people of the 'majority world' has been widely exposed in the social science literature. No force has possibly been as efficient as IPBS in the oppression of the 'majority world' and in the marginalization of local educational knowledge. Through its subtle influence, this cognitive imperialism has effectively destroyed and deformed non-Western educational methods. This book is also an attempt to approach the essence of the complex educational knowledge of the people of the 'majority world'.

Indigenous ways of knowing share the following structure: (a) knowledge of and belief in unseen powers in the ecosystem, (b) knowledge that all things in the ecosystem are dependent on each other, (c) knowledge that reality is structured according to most of the linguistic concepts by which indigenous people describe it, (d) knowledge that personal relationships reinforce the bond between persons, communities and ecosystems, (e) knowledge that sacred traditions and persons who know these traditions are responsible for teaching 'morals' and 'ethics' to practitioners who are then given responsibility for this specialized knowledge and its dissemination, and (f) knowledge that an extended kinship passes on teachings and social practices from generation to generation (Battiste and Henderson, 2000: 42).

PRESENTATION OF THE BOOK

The volume is structured into four sections. The first section, informal and indigenous education, starts with a chapter by Dasen on informal education and learning processes, in which the author presents an integrated theoretical framework for the cross-cultural study of human development and education defined as cultural transmission. This is followed by a critique of Western ethnocentrism in developmental

psychology and educational sciences by one of the leading African advocates of an 'indigenous' perspective, Nsamenang, who illustrates the teachings of an 'Afrocentric' perspective on the example of current research in Cameroon. A similar African voice comes from Zambia, with Serpell's concept of 'participatory appropriation'. He shows how an African approach to education for social responsibility has taken shape within the context of public primary and secondary schools in Zambia. We leave the African continent for France with the chapter by Herzog, an American anthropologist who studies a particularly successful system of apprenticeship called 'compagnonnage'.

The second section of the book deals with the search for a culturally appropriate schooling for aboriginal people in various parts of the world. While Teasdale reports several innovative examples from Australia and the Pacific, Mishra deals with tribal education in India, and Batriste with what she calls 'decolonizing' aboriginal education in Canada. Gajardo, Carrarini, Marin, and Dasen provide an overview of so-called intercultural and bilingual education programmes in Latin America. What all of these chapters have in common is a search for culturally appropriate forms of schooling for local, indigenous populations. Whether these are demographically a minority or not, they have been culturally and socio-economically dispossessed over a long period of time, and are now trying to regain their autonomy and cultural identity. Gaining control over the education system is an important part of this process.

The third section presents several examples of formal educational institutions that are not based on the Western model, but are linked to various religions. Akkari deals with Islamic or Quramic schooling, Mishra and Vapayee as well as Broyon with Sanskrit schooling in India, and Changkakoti and Broyon, also mainly in the Indian subcontinent, with Buddhist schooling. While all of these examples are linked to the so-called major religions, those based on written scriptures, Hounkpe reveals the little known existence of boarding schools linked to the animistic voodoo religion in Benin. The purpose of studying these various forms of schooling is obviously not to suggest that these could be exported beyond their respective sphere of influence, but to show that in various parts of the world, there have been and still are very influential formal systems of education, beyond IPBS, that have the advantage of being locally rooted and hence culturally more appropriate, and which use interesting pedagogical methods.

The fourth and last section of the book raises some global political issues, such as the educational crisis produced by globalization. Akkari shows how one of the foremost pedagogical theorists, Paolo Freire, is still very influential in suggesting innovative educational alternatives from and for the majority world. Marin deals with the historical roots of Western cultural domination through schooling, and the current problems created by the unchecked expansion of economic capitalism. In the concluding chapter of the volume, Akkari and Dasen follow up by examining some of the current challenges facing schooling in a global perspective.

Some of the chapters in this book were prepared for a post-graduate course organized by the co-editors in 2002 under the auspices of the Conference Universitaire de Suisse Occidentale (CUSO), a granting commission of the francophone universities in Switzerland, and were initially published in French (Akkari and Dasen, 2004). Others have been solicited specifically for this book.

The goal of this book is to start a new debate on a long-term educational construction: to build schools that are open to all and which hold the values and worldviews of the majority world. This is a salutary undertaking to reconstruct the schools of tomorrow, which questions the very foundations of the IPBS format. With its mass attendance, the current school model is becoming less and less adequate in terms of the needs of an ever-changing world. It produces more and more students who are maladjusted, and disgusted for life with learning. At the same time, an active and cooperative continuing education system is more and more a necessity. Far from being backward-looking, educational methods from the 'majority world' respect the needs and rhythms of learners, and allow them to establish an active relationship with knowledge. By contributing to build a new educational project, this volume hopes to represent an alternative to Western educational 'modernity' in fostering an inclusive pedagogy.

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