

Editorial Preface

Diversifying Diversity Research

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A few days ago, a project ‘co-funded’ by the European Union (EU), whereby Chinese educators and scholars involved in intercultural communication education were provided with resources for teaching interculturality, announced that they were launching a YouTube channel. The project was the continuation of another project, also sponsored by the EU, which had been conducted in Europe years earlier. A quick look at the documents created for the ‘Chinese’ project shows a clear replication of the original project, with one Chinese addition limited to what is described as a ‘Chinese anthropocosmic’ approach (i.e., a concept from the Chinese philosopher Confucius). The end result represents a good example of an ideological patchwork combining (amongst others) EU, UNESCO-ish, ‘critical interculturality’ parlance, which, I suspect (I hope I am wrong), educators and their students alike will find very confusing and contradictory in China and other parts of the world.

When I saw this announcement, I was shocked. Not only had the project contributed to some form of knowledge neo-colonialism by having a group of Chinese scholars and educators ‘guided’ by European (mostly ‘white’) scholars to learn about interculturality, but the outcome of the project also showed a complete disregard for the context where the ‘resources’ were meant to be used: *Mainland China*. YOUTUBE IS NOT ACCESSIBLE IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM... Why then put these resources on a channel which cannot be accessed by the thousands of Chinese educators who might be interested in the project outcome? As a response to my surprise on Chinese social media, one of the scholars involved in this EU project wrote: “It is for those who can in or outside of China”. Everything was said: although this is a project about interculturality (in its ‘Westernized’ form, co-joined with one ‘Chinese anthropocosmic’ element), it is not really ‘intercultural’ as it just applies to the ‘selected few’ who can cross national borders and ‘enjoy’ access to both Western and Chinese social media... *What about the others?* If you asked me, I would say they are in fact lucky since they will not be part of a ‘provincialised’ *coup de force* to influence their ways of thinking about interculturality and diversity. Should the project have been based on real reciprocity (‘EU’ globalising knowledge dialoguing with Chinese knowledge of interculturality) then the loss would have been meaningful...

This unfortunate example of both knowledge neo-colonialism and complete disregard for the ‘targeted’ context in terms of dissemination is not a surprising form of false generosity. This happens all the time. All the nice discourses of ‘empowering the Other’, ‘decolonizing knowledge’ do not appear to be working. Why the EU would want to spread this kind of knowledge to China (and pay for it) is interesting in itself... As such the way we discuss, construct and ‘implement’ interculturality is always political and ideological. Ideas from the EU context cannot but be influenced by local (economic-political) conditions and ideologies. But how do they fit in the Chinese context? How do Chinese colleagues integrate these ideologies in their teaching? How do they combine them with Chinese ideologies of interculturality? This is all happening as if the intercultural was *a-politicised*... but, of course, it is not!

Since I read the announcement I have been fantasizing of a world where the ‘Chinese story of interculturality’ (a very long and rich history and present of interculturality) were ‘spoonfed’ to European scholars and educators, sponsored by the Chinese authorities and whose resources were placed on Chinese apps only accessible in Mainland China. I would love to see the faces of EU

decision-makers and the scholars befriending them... I suppose that multiple demonstrations, petitions and diplomatic battles would ensue...

Education for and scholarship for diversity in education, of which interculturality is a major player, is an unjust field globally. Although it is complex and composed of many and varied ideological perspectives about different aspects of identities in education, it is clearly governed by the 'privileged' who can talk over and for others, telling them what to do, how to define what they experience, and how to get educated/trained to prepare for it. But diversity education must always be considered as a controversial question for the world: who has the right to talk (over/for/with) whom and to decide what it is and entails? Listening to today's calls for modesty from the 'privileged' in the 'Western' world, isn't it time to uphold the (implicit) 'Western' status quo of diversity and interculturality in education?

Modesty from the 'privileged' (myself included) must include:

- keeping alive speculations about aspects of diversity and interculturality that 'we' (think we) are certain of, pinpointing our own ideological positions;
- reimagining diversity and interculturality and how to deal with them with others, by listening to them and entering into dialogues;
- letting others ask questions about diversity and interculturality according to their own conditions and beliefs;
- learning with others about how to provide (changeable) answers to these questions.

This new issue of *IJBIDE* represents an attempt to address these renewed diversity goals through three studies focusing on gender and sexuality, plurilingualism and global cultural competency.

In "Composing Lives Alongside: Narrative Meaning Making and Life Making in Relation," Derek A. Hutchinson and M. Shaun Murphy examine a student's life story around sexuality from a curricular perspective. The authors' interest is in the influence of sociality on the complex life experiences taking place in schools. The results are relevant for any educator wishing to open up to other ways of considering their students' life making.

Daniel Roy Pearce, Mayo Oyama, Danièle Moore, Yuki Kitano, and Emiko Fujita focus on a collaborative integrative plurilingual STEAM practice in Japan. Helping students develop an investigative stance toward linguistic and cultural diversity in relation to 'international cuisine', the authors show that this approach contributes to a deeper awareness of languages and openness to diversity, reflexivity, and interdisciplinary engagement.

Papia Bawa's paper focuses on educator's preparation to work with international students by introducing them to a model fostering global cultural empathy and preparedness (the Doppelganger Change Effect: DICE). Based on a Qualitative Case Study investigation that piloted the conceptual theory of cultural preparedness, the author examines the influence of DICE on the educators' self-awareness and self-concepts of their global empathy skills and abilities.

2021 is drawing to a close, and two years into the current pandemic. At *IJBIDE* we feel that we have learnt a lot about diversity in education through engaging with our authors. And, although this pandemic has been painful, it has opened our eyes even wider in front of the problems of diversity and interculturality that many of us experience in education around the world. As always, we look forward to attracting original papers and special issues. Please feel free to contact us!