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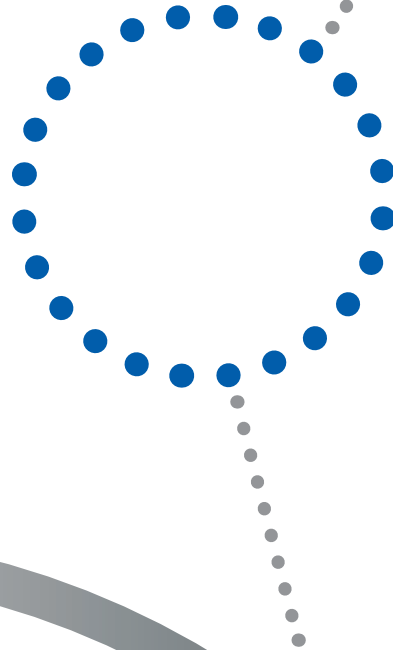
'Worldly' pedagogies: preparing students to work and live in a complex and uncertain world
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The findings of a small-scale study are discussed which examined (with a co-researcher) a programme where Palestinian and Israeli students were studying together in the UK for a period of three years. The study revealed the elements of a teaching approach that inflected the way students understood, discussed and related to a conflict that was deeply influencing their learning experience in the UK. The relevance of these findings to the more general theme of global citizenship is discussed.

Keywords

Introduction

I examine the challenges for universities of preparing students to live and work in today's globalised context – whether they decide to live and work close to home in the UK or in remote regions of the world. I start with a discussion of the phrase 'global citizenship' as a concept that has been adopted by a number of universities in the West to articulate their approach to educating for a globalised world, and providing students with attributes that will help them face the technical, social, cultural, environmental or ethical challenges brought about by globalisation. While there is a sense that this is underpinned by a multicultural and civic agenda – a form of education that raises awareness of political, social and economic stakes in the world – in practice visions and conceptions abound of what this means. I will show that it can serve to disguise the real agenda of educational providers and promotes reductive understandings of diversity. I will offer an alternative that focuses on the pedagogies which universities can adopt to face the daunting task of preparing students to live and work in today's world. I do this through discussing a small-scale study in which I examined (with a co-researcher) a programme where Palestinian and Israeli students were studying together in the UK for a period of three years. Based on this analysis, I present a framework for what I have called 'worldly pedagogies', a term inspired by the work of Hannah Arendt in The Human Condition where she associates the sustainability of a common world to a defence of plurality (Arendt, 1958). The worldly pedagogies I discuss here aim to enable students to develop strategies to reflect on ways to live and work in a complex world.

Defining global citizenship

I will start with a discussion of the concept of global citizenship. Whilst there is quite a tightly defined agenda of global citizenship in schools – in the UK particularly – the issue of what it is in the context of universities, is much less clear.

I have shown in another publication on this topic that, from a high level of analysis focused on its aims, there are two polarized ways of thinking about global citizenship education (Fanghanel & Cousin, 2012). First, global citizenship has been presented as a multicultural endeavour that emphasises the value of local cultures and local knowledge (practical or ethnically specific types of knowledge as opposed to abstract or expert knowledge). Broadly, this is a view that praises the celebration of diversity. The second way of envisaging the global citizenship agenda is more political, and it critiques this concept by pointing to the 'post-colonial' nature of the global citizenship enterprise. In this view, global citizenship is seen as an attempt to 'westernize' the rest of the world. There are in fact a number of elements in the term global citizenship which I summarise below.

1) Going back to the Greek philosophers, Diogenes claimed to be a 'citizen of the world' (kosmopolitês) and Seneca is known for his 'cultivation of humanity' (Nussbaum, 1997). Global citizenship is related to the broader notion of 'cosmopolitanism' which emphasises mutual interdependencies in a globalised world (Fine, 2007). In the cosmopolitan perspective, global citizenship rejects 'provenance-based theories of identity' (Hill, 2009). This means that diversity amongst individuals cannot simply be determined by their geographical or cultural origins. For the German philosopher Beck emphasising such geographical or cultural determination – what he calls 'the territorial prison theory of identity'– leads to narrow definitions of global citizenship (Beck, 2006, p.7). Cosmopolitan views of citizenship therefore endorse non-deterministic views of diversity. For a cosmopolitan thinker, people, as agents, chose to engage in the world as individuals who are freed from belonging to a nation.

2) The notion of global citizenship can be interpreted as an agenda addressing the failings of neoliberalism where neoliberalism is defined as an approach to governance which relies on rational economic models, and promotes the view that competition and market principles are the best drivers of performance. This model emerged – in the West – in the early eighties (associated with Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the United States), although it may be more exact to trace it back to Pinochet's economic reforms in Chile in the early seventies. In the context of globalisation and global citizenship, applying free market principles to most aspects of social life generates a reflection on the distinction Richard Falk (Falk, 1994) has made between 'globalisation from above' which focuses on broad globalizing trends, power structures, global flow and enterprise; and 'globalisation from below' which focuses on the local outcomes of globalisation, the impact on peoples and individuals. In this sense global citizenship education focuses the educational endeavour on the social, geopolitical or human right aspects of social life in a globalised world.

3) For many universities, global citizenship is about the global market, and the need to recruit worldwide and integrate students in a multi-cultural community of learners. What is referred to as the 'internationalizing' agenda in universities reflects this understanding of global citizenship. It focuses on the economic advantage of 'going global' and sometimes too on the need for opportunities of a global education for all students through a 'multi-cultural' campus. Within the internationalizing agenda, understandings of multi-culturalism (or diversity) are more or less sophisticated. 'Universalist multiculturalism' for example represents the post-colonial perspective described earlier in which the bridging of difference is seen as an export of Western values to the rest of the world (e.g. Andreotti et al. 2010). Relativistic understandings of multi-culturalism, on the other hand, may lead universities to display a relatively unproblematized approach to cultural differences by focusing on 'respect of differences' (e.g. see a review of this literature by Caruana and Spurling (Caruana and Spurling, 2006).

4) For a number of universities in the UK, the US and Australia, in particular, the necessity of preparing students for work has provided an opportunity to reflect on university curricula for a global world, and on the kinds of attributes universities want to promote in graduates (Barrie, 2004, Jones, 2009) – the 'graduate attributes' agenda. In this perspective, some universities offer 'global citizenship projects' that engage students in transformative projects to raise awareness of global stakes, and to engage actively with global issues (see for example the Elon Global Scholars' experience. http://org.elon.edu/pericleanscholars2010/cp.html or http://www.ewb-uk.org/)

5) For others still, global citizenship necessarily brings about questions about privilege, mobility and access to education globally – examining who has access to global educational fluxes and who is excluded (Luke, 2006). The focus on a possibly elitist subtext in the notion of global citizenship also leads to a reflection on the related question of the emancipatory dimension of higher education (Nussbaum, 2000; Walker and Nixon, 2004) and the opportunities it brings to individuals, enabling them to change their lives and to impact on the societies in which they live.

6) Finally, beyond the global focus, the term global citizenship encapsulates a reflection on citizenship. Citizenship implies both 'rights' and 'duties' for individual and groups; and it is necessarily related to the value systems that are underpinning the elaboration of those 'rights' and 'duties'.

Worldly pedagogies

The complex issues encapsulated in the notion of global citizenship call for questions about the university curriculum – should universities provide opportunities for students to reflect in this way on the world's stakes? Can they? What kind of knowledge and pedagogical approaches are then likely to foster this kind of understanding?

In order to show what this could mean in practice, and – to an extent – to justify the introduction of this dimension of learning in a university curriculum, I want to make reference to a small-scale research project

carried out with a co-researcher in the UK which involved the co-education of Israeli and Palestinian students over a period time in a British university (Fanghanel and Cousin, 2012).This project examined the way these students on a three-year programme of study developed their understandings of their own situation with reference to the global stakes that framed it, and the way in which their worldview evolved through their programme of study. The study identified what we have called a 'worldly pedagogy '– i.e. a teaching approach that promotes complex understandings of difference in the context of living and working in a shared global world. This educational environment was investigated through a series of eight long semi-structured interviews (out of a cohort of sixteen). Through this study, we identified the ingredients of a worldly pedagogy and suggested that it is an approach that encourages deliberation and reflection and promotes plurality of views and positions (rather than cohesion or integration). This pedagogy is underpinned by a complex theory of knowledge which combines experiential knowledge (both affective and practical), critique and what Michael Young has called 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2008). Powerful knowledge empowers the learner with access to knowledge that is independent of context (abstract or theoretical). The theory of gravitation is a good example of what might be seen as 'context-independent' knowledge. Context-independent knowledge has been validated through peer-review, cross-generational critique and/or put to the test of subsequent theoretical developments (as in the case of gravitation theory). We called this a 'worldly' pedagogy with reference to Hannah Arendt's own philosophical reflection on the 'worldly' experience of humans sharing a 'common world' (Arendt, 1958) – a reflection which was significantly influenced by her experience of the holocaust. She talks of the necessity to envisage the world as 'common' good which can only be sustained through working actively to maintain differences within it:

'Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear. Under the conditions of a common world, reality is not guaranteed primarily by the 'common nature' of all men

who constitute it, but rather by the fact that, differences of position and the resulting variety of perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object'. (Arendt 1958, p.57)

My interpretation of Arendt's common world invites a focus on the public and the political. Political in its broad sense of an interest in the governance and organisation of the polis (the city in ancient Greece; the world in today's context) which transcends the lifespan of individuals, and whose survival can only be guaranteed by the differences of positions resulting from a variety of perspectives. In this Arendtian perspective, the common world can only be sustained through plurality. Sameness on the other hand – like totalitarianism – would destroy it (Arendt, 1958). In this sense, higher education must be about understanding and promoting difference whilst focusing on commonalities; and achieving this through pedagogies that are underpinned by complex theories of knowledge that include practical, work-related, experiential and affective dimensions, as well as the abstract dimension Young refers to when he talks of 'powerful knowledge'.

The Study

Before going into the details of the study, I must state that of course the environment examined was extreme. I do not know of any similar educational cross-conflict initiatives, involving young adults studying over a prolonged period, and away from their respective regions. There exists of course many recreational or service-based reconciliation programmes for children and young adults which include an educational dimension. 'Corrymeela' in Northern Ireland for example is a community-based programme of inter-faith work. But this was different. Respondents were staying in the UK for a period of three years. The regular academic programme was complemented by a cultural programme which included lectures, seminars, visits and cultural entertainment that explored the culture and history of the region. Our research sought to establish through in-depth interviews (lasting up to two hours) the meanings participants had made of their experiences, a year after graduation. We therefore focused on their recall of 'lived' experience, their descriptions of

specific strategies used on the programme, with systematic reference to the context of their life at the university, as well as through their distant / real link to the region of conflict. This example is particularly suited to reflect on the notion of global citizenship as it focuses on respondents who were embroiled in global stakes through their personal and national histories and identities. It provides an opportunity to examine how their views moved from one way of seeing the world to multiple ways of seeing it, without falling into the trap of relativism.

Extreme examples can inform ordinary practices in that they shed a vivid light on the issue examined. In order to illustrate how extreme this example was, and how much progress needed to be made over this period of three years, let us remind ourselves that these students had never found themselves in a similar position at any time in their lives. Palestinian students brought with them a strong sense of the precariousness of their previous existence, shedding a light on the unsteadiness they were bringing to the educational experience:

"When you live in Gaza, all that you think about is how to pass your day, how to manage to think about your evening, the maximum you will do is think about tomorrow. You will never think about the future. So life in Gaza makes your ambitions very limited. So the fact that I came here, I managed to do many things that I would never have been able to do in Gaza, it opened my eyes on the world".

They had never seen an Israeli person, other than as an enemy. There was a strong sense of that 'provenance' inflection in the respondents' narratives:

"If you are educated in the Jewish narrative, you are born in it, and that's what they teach you, you don't have a choice". (Israeli student)

"When you come here (in London) you can't throw away twenty years of your life and start a new history. So I learnt about history from the Israeli point of view, but I stick with mine because I am from there". (Palestinian student)

The programme was aimed at 'gifted' individuals who had been through a selection process that takes place in the region, and it aimed to develop participants' leadership skills in anticipation of their future careers. It also emphasized the aim to promote dialogue across the two communities and foster mutual respect and cooperation in the pursuit of peace. We explored significant learning moments, events and experiences and participants' narratives about their own motivations, their perspectives of the conflict, and changes experienced during their period of study. Two important characteristics of this experience, and the two main findings therefore, were that these students learned to understand the complexity of the questions they were dealing with (their perspective had become more nuanced) and they had decided to live with the plural perspective they had learned to appreciate (they were not seeking to convert or integrate those who thought differently). The third important finding was that this maturation was facilitated through the interplay of a complex theory of knowledge. I turn to those findings now.

Learning to live with plurality in a common world

The study concluded that contributing to the programme did not bring the participants closer to a median position in respect of their views of each 'side'. What it did instead was to provide them with a form of empowerment resulting from exposure to difference and to ways of conceptualizing and arguing about these differences (through access to powerful knowledge) and an acute awareness of what they had in common (Arendt's 'common world'). This was expressed through their desire to envisage a common future; their acknowledgement of the 'partial' (both incomplete and bias) understanding of the world they had at the beginning of their studies; and their awareness that their singular cultural roots could not be dismissed. Here are a couple of examples of the apparent paradox between their sense of commonality, and participants' appreciation of the plurality of the experiences and views they were bringing with them, not simply across the two groups, but within them:

"I didn't expect to make a change in their mindset but at least to learn that there are people in Gaza who are willing to make peace with them. This is the only thing that I think I achieved. [. . .] [I have learned] that when we deal with people about the conflict, we should not deal with the Israeli community as one whole body". (R3)

"When I see things, when I hear about things I have lost the ability to think about it only from the Israeli point of view". (R4)

What had been happening during their period of study was a transformation that enabled students to understand the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the conflict, of the cultures and histories they brought with them, and of the reasons why divergent interpretations of the conflict existed. This was not always the case and this ability to understand with more richness was significantly challenged by students' experience of the everyday context in the 'region'. Sometimes, especially as they returned home during the summer holidays, respondents returned with altered understandings that forced them to take sides, as the case of this Palestinian respondent:

"When you return, even for one week, you will never hear of one day without any killing. So in this kind of situation, what can you tell your friends? What can you tell people? Do you say 'I was with some Israelis who want to make peace?' If they are educated, they will laugh. Or it can be a little bit more dangerous. Some people would have no problem of accusing me or any other Palestinians to be working for the Israeli. So these experiences are hidden in myself". (R3)

We have suggested that in this context of warfare, the experiences of which this respondent is speaking cannot be erased. We have compared this to the concept of 'troublesome knowledge' (Perkins, 1999) – a concept that is difficult to grasp but the understanding of which cannot disappear once it has been acquired. We have suggested that celebrating diversity without any analysis of difference, as I have indicated earlier is sometimes done in universities, seems to dismiss troublesome knowledge and the empowerment that is gained from exposure to plurality. We have suggested that universities could be a space described by Arendt as 'where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness' (Arendt 1958, p.180). We also found that this was done through pedagogies that favour dialogue, debate and exposure to complex theories of knowledge.

The sense of complexity and multidimensionality of the positions taken by respondents in these dialogues and debates during their studies, makes them epistemologically more sophisticated (they gain an understanding of the complexity of knowledge). Some respondents indicated that they were challenged when they were exposed to narratives that competed with their beliefs and knowledge:

"If you are educated in the Jewish narrative, you are born in it, and that's what they teach you, you don't have a choice. The programme allows that there are different narratives, and then make up your mind about those different narratives". (R2)

The empowerment that was achieved was also linked to a sense that they needed to work on their own personal narratives to progress in their viewpoints:

"Every time I had to go back, I felt a lot of frustration and to some extent I didn't want to be part of the programme anymore. It is really hard because you go there and you see things, then you come back here and you hear people speaking about different things". (R5)

Empowering theories of knowledge

The form of pedagogy I am discussing here encourages deliberation and reflection. In the case of the students in the study, this was facilitated through a pedagogical approach that combined experiential (affective and practical) knowledge, through access to narratives about each other's lives, and abstract, content-based knowledge. In the context of today's modern universities, developing employability attributes should also figure prominently – and for a number of operational reasons this had been insufficiently explored in this educational programme. This combination is crucial. One should however be aware of a 'conservative' return to views of education that only focus on abstract knowledge. Acknowledging the social, practical and the cognitive dimensions of learning, and acknowledging the legitimacy of specialist communities goes hand in hand with the assurance that critical thinking is encouraged, and access to abstract knowledge is facilitated. I suggest that such post-constructivist views of knowledge can provide

a powerful alternative to pedagogies where students fall into patterns of self-promotion, self-publication, and experiential reporting, with little sense of authorship, values, sourcing or understanding of boundaries.

In the study I have reported on here, it was clear that the multi-dimensional theory of knowledge that underpinned the learning experience of students played a significant role. The students attended lectures given by specialists in the field on issues covering social, political and historical aspects. The respondents we spoke to all indicated that these lectures and the discussions that followed played a significant role in shaping their understandings. Students indicated that it had given them the tools for developing and sustaining an argument, making a point, actively listening to other perspectives, reflecting on the meaning of what was said and coming to informed judgments about the issues discussed. They said that they were better able to describe and analyse the conflict 'using vocabulary that was less emotional' (R2). They reported being able to articulate their own points of view; developing listening and argumentation skills, and more importantly, it would seem, the ability to engage in discussions and dialogue. This was empowering:

"I never had the confidence to express my views because they were not based on knowledge of the history of the conflict and of the region; and also because of my own my cultural heritage, the things I was born into, that I grew up with but never really analysed academically and spiritually as well". (R7)

Equally important to frame their understanding, was access to what one respondent called 'history' (i.e. the narratives of other students on the programme concerning their life's experience). Access to the emotional and practical dimensions of others' experience was critical – giving a human face, and at the same time contextualizing the abstract knowledge acquired about the conflict:

"I learned a lot more about Israeli society and I learned how I can connect to the other side better... I started to understand how they think... The history part of it was very important too, not kind of lecturing... it wasn't really information I was looking for but more for the narratives. It was a very good experience to

understand these narratives in terms of how you think about me, and how I think about you, these kinds of things". (R8)

This kind of knowledge gave the experience its physicality. Through this, respondents enhanced their emotional capital and their appreciation of internal variation (within what might have thought of as a homogenous group) and complexity. I propose that these are essential attributes to function and work responsibly in today's globalised world.

Conclusion

To engage students with the world's complexity, we need knowledge frames that enable exposure to abstract knowledge, critique, and experience (emotive, practical, work-related). In sum, this worldly pedagogy has the following characteristics:

- It links to the real world (political, social and work-related) and the real experience and practice of students. But it does this with reference to context-independent knowledge. This combination of different types of knowledge is crucial, so that experience and practice are related to research and the abstract subject-specific body of knowledge that underpins the evolution of their chosen subject

- It provides spaces where it is safe to explore and disagree basing one's argumentation on a body of abstract /verified knowledge rather than mere opinion

- It conveys a sense that explanations are rarely simple and monolithic

- It enables students to acquire intellectual sophistication as they gain nuanced appreciations of their own beliefs and experiences in the encounter with others and with real life situations (socially or at work)

- It preserves and defends plurality whilst maintaining a focus on commonalities within groups. Plurality is not washed out in the notion of 'diversity'

- Practically, this pedagogy privileges dialogue, openness and critical exploration of diverse perspectives. It promotes learning as a lifelong concept – always in the making, never quite achieved.

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