

Professional Development for Teachers of Migrant Students in Europe: Challenges and Possibilities

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Questions

- ▶ What constitutes professional development for teachers of migrant students so that social justice ideals are foregrounded rather than backgrounded? And so what? That is, what difference does it make? and;
- ▶ How can professional development for teachers of migrant teachers be organized so that it contributes to the vision of creating intercultural, inclusive, and socially just schools?

Socially just teaching

A teacher's effort to transform policies and enact pedagogies that improve the learning and life opportunities of typically underserved students such as migrant students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994), while equipping and empowering all students to work for a more socially just society themselves (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998).

New challenges

- ▶ cultural conflict between ‘host’ cultures and migrants’ cultures;
- ▶ language differences and communication difficulties experienced by migrant children;
- ▶ economic disparities among migrants and other marginalized groups that struggle to survive; and,
- ▶ academic disparities among migrant students who have higher rates of drop out and expulsion than so called ‘native’ students

Challenges that teachers have to cope with

- ▶ the view of migrant children by local populations as a threat to European values and the welfare state;
- ▶ the creation of hierarchies of otherness according to the ethnic and racial characteristics of migrant children; and,
- ▶ the challenge of dealing pedagogically with these social and cultural transformations without proper teacher preparation or supportive policies and adequate pedagogical practices

Effective professional development experiences

1. “are driven by a well-defined image of effective classroom learning and teaching,”
2. “provide opportunities for teachers to build their knowledge and skills,”
3. “use or model with teachers the strategies they use with their students,”
4. “build a learning community,”
5. “support teachers to serve in leadership roles,”
6. “provide links to other parts of the education system,” and
7. “continuously assess themselves and make improvements, to ensure positive impact on teacher effectiveness, student learning, leadership, and the school community” (pp. 36–37)

Loucks–Horsley et al. (1998)

Components for the preparation of teachers for diverse classrooms

- ▶ to recognize and accept other cultures;
- ▶ to commit to equity and social justice for all students;
- ▶ to maintain high expectations for all students; to engage students academically by building on what they know and what interests them;
- ▶ to develop strong relationships with students;
- ▶ to relate to the students' families and communities in culturally responsive ways;
- ▶ to establish collaborative learning environments, envision students as constructive participants in a multicultural democracy;
- ▶ to understand the political issues outside the classroom (Cochran-Smith; Darling-Hammond; Sleeter)

Three guiding principles of professional development for teachers of migrant students

1. Being responsive and theoretically explicit about the holistic vision of socially just teaching;
2. Educating teachers as “transformative intellectuals” who problematize deficit views, recognize the pervasiveness of social injustices and take action to promote social justice; and,
3. Providing ongoing and on-site support.

The “Social Justice and Reconciliation Pedagogies” Project

- ▶ (i) to engage in detailed investigations of the curricular and pedagogical dynamics informing policies and practices of intercultural education in the Greek–Cypriot educational system;
- ▶ (ii) to document and develop informed theoretical and methodological approaches to intercultural pedagogies that promote reconciliation and social justice and consider how Greek–Cypriot schools might more productively facilitate and participate in such practices; and
- ▶ (iii) to produce new pedagogical material that enriches the pedagogical practices of Greek–Cypriot teachers on such issues as multiculturalism, reconciliation, and social justice in the context of unresolved ethnic conflict in Cyprus

Conclusion

- ▶ Unpack the complexity of current professional development programs and their effectiveness in preparing teachers for diverse student populations in Europe;
- ▶ Make social justice a central construct in teacher professional development practices;
- ▶ Promote critical and democratic participation