Exploring Intersectionality and Identity Politics in Post-Foundational Teacher Education

Martina Riedler[1]

Abstract: This paper explores the ways in which socio-cultural and political identities are constructed and negotiated in the contemporary teacher education programs. It argues that the postmodern condition has had a profound impact on the way we understand and experience culture, making it more difficult to define one's socio-cultural and political identities. By using Intersectionality as an analytic framework, the paper begins by discussing the concept of socio-cultural identity and identity politics. It argues that socio-cultural identity is a dynamic and fluid construct that is constantly being negotiated and reshaped. The paper then examines the impact of postmodern condition on socio-cultural identity formation. It argues that information revolution have made it possible for people to connect with others from different cultures and backgrounds, which has led to a blurring of cultural boundaries. The paper then turns to the implications of these changes for teacher education. It argues that art educators need to be aware of the ways in which new media and information technologies are shaping socio-cultural identities. They need to create learning environments that allow students to explore and express their own socio-cultural identities. The paper concludes by discussing the ways in which critical perspectives and practices can be used to negotiate artistic and pedagogical identities in the context of changing socio-cultural identities. It argues that post-foundational critical perspectives can help students to critically examine the ways in which their own identities are shaped by culture.

[1] **Martina Riedler**, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Art Education, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University ORCID: 0000-0001-5207-9644

Email: riedler@comu.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

The new media and postmodern information age have changed the way individuals see and experience cultures, making it more complicated to define one's socio-cultural identity. In this paper, I will explore the role of socio-cultural and political identities in teacher education in relation to the theory of intersectionality.

In the age of globalization and information technologies, teacher educators need to be aware of the changing socio-cultural landscape and the implications for their practice. They need to be able to help students negotiate their own socio-cultural and political identities in a world where cultures are increasingly interconnected. By using intersectionality as an analytic framework, I will discuss the ways in which critical perspectives and practices can be used to negotiate the pedagogical identities of preservice teachers in these changing contexts.

Intersectionality and Socio-cultural Identity Formation

Psychological theories of learning and identity have been the main approach to teacher education and research for many years. These theories are based on individual and cognitive models, such as interpretive theory, reflective practice, and pragmatic learning (Eryaman, 2007; Riedler & Eryaman, 2016).

These models typically view the formation of professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and identity as separate processes. They focus on how individuals acquire knowledge and skills, and how they develop problem-solving abilities. Knowledge is seen as a technical tool that is acquired in one setting and then applied to other settings.

However, there is increasing recognition that these processes are interrelated and that learning and identity formation are not linear or unidimensional. More recent theories have begun to take into account the social and cultural context of learning, as well as the role of emotions and identity in the learning process (Eryaman & Riedler, 2009). One of these analytical perspectives is Intersectionality.

Intersectionality is an approach for comprehending how social identities, such as gender, race, class, age, and other factors, interrelate to generate unique practices of domination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1994). It recognizes that these identities are not independent of each other, but rather that they interact in complex ways. (Pugach, Gomez-Najarro & Matewos, 2019) It can help us to identify and challenge the systems of power that create and maintain these inequalities (Dhamoon, 2011; Hancock, 2007). Intersectionality is a valuable tool for understanding the complex ways in which people experience oppression. It can help us to identify and challenge the systems of power that create and maintain these inequalities.

Intersectionality and Post-Foundational Teacher Education

Understanding the complexity of students' multiple identities is important for teacher educators in several ways. First, it can help them to understand how students' experiences of risk and privilege are shaped by their intersecting identities. Second, it can help them to identify the multiple assets that students bring to the learning environment. Third, it can help them to develop more sophisticated approaches to teaching and learning that are inclusive and equitable (Eryaman, 2008).

An intersectional approach is one way to understand the complexity of students' identities. Intersectionality is a framework that recognizes that people's identities are not independent of each other, but rather that they intersect in complex ways. This means that a student's experience of race, for example, cannot be separated from their experience of class, gender, or sexuality.

An intersectional approach can be valuable for teacher educators because it can help them to see the world from the perspective of their students. It can also help them to develop teaching strategies that are responsive to the needs of all students. However, it is important to note that intersectionality is not the only framework that can be used to understand students' identities. Other frameworks, such as critical race theory or postmodern identity theories, may also be valuable (Pugach, Gomez-Najarro & Matewos, 2019).

The characteristics of the intersectional approach could be employed within the post-foundational teacher education framework. Eryaman (2007) conceptualizes the post-foundational teacher education as follows:

> The post-foundational way of thinking about teacher education put ontological, and practical issues of selfhood and human agency at center stage, and describes teaching practice as a political, ideological, gendered, sexual, racial, transformative, social, discursive, engaged, indigenous, lived, or performed Praxis.

In post-foundational teacher education, transactional and subjective epistemology and ontology is an approach that views knowledge as being created through the interaction between a particular practitioner and a particular context. This approach challenges the traditional distinction between ontology (the study of the nature of reality) and epistemology (the study of how we know what we know). Transactional epistemology recognizes that the knowledge that we create is influenced by our own values and experiences. It also recognizes that the context in which we learn and teach is constantly changing. This means that our knowledge is always evolving and that there is no one "right" way to teach. Subjective ontology recognizes that there is no single, objective reality. Instead, there are multiple realities that are created by different people and groups. This means that we need to be open to different perspectives and ways of knowing.

Noddings (1988) argues that teaching from the perspective of an ethic of caring involves four key elements:

1. Teacher modeling: Teachers model intellectual activity and desirable ways of interacting with people. This means that teachers should be thoughtful, reflective, and respectful in their interactions with students.

2. Problem-solving through communication: Teachers and students work together to solve problems through open and honest communication. This means that teachers should be willing to listen to students' ideas and concerns, and that they should be open to feedback.

3. Encouraging quality interaction: Teachers encourage quality interaction between students, between teachers and students, and between parents and teachers. This means that teachers should create a classroom environment where students feel safe and respected, and where they feel comfortable interacting with each other and with their teachers.

4. Confirmation of the cared-for: Teachers confirm the cared-for by revealing to them an attainable image of themselves that is lovelier than that manifested in their present acts. This means that teachers should believe in their students and help them to see their own potential.

Howe (1986) argues that teachers need to exhibit the following six characteristics of the ethics of teaching in order to be effective moral educators:

Appreciation for moral deliberation: Teachers need to be able to recognize that individuals' interests may conflict. This means that they need to be able to think critically about ethical issues and to consider the perspectives of all involved parties.

Empathy: Teachers need to be able to assume the viewpoints and imagine the feelings of others. This means that they need to be able to understand and appreciate the perspectives of their students, even when they disagree with them.

Interpersonal skills: Teachers need to be able to interact with others in a sensitive and humane way. This means that they need to be able to communicate effectively, to build relationships, and to resolve conflicts.

Knowledge: Teachers need to have the knowledge they need to formulate reasonable strategies and to anticipate their consequences. This means that they need to be familiar with the subject matter they are teaching, as well as with the developmental needs of their students.

Ability to reason through a conclusion: Teachers need to be able to reason through a conclusion and to justify their decisions. This means that they need to be able to think logically and to articulate their thoughts clearly.

Courage to convert conclusion to action: Teachers need to have the courage to convert their conclusions to action. This means that they need to be willing to take risks and to stand up for what they believe in.

The post-foundational approach to teacher education with the emphasis on openness and care has several implications. First, it suggests that preservice teachers need to be prepared to think critically about the knowledge that they are taught. They also need to be prepared to reflect on their own values and experiences and how these factors influence their teaching (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016).

Second, the post-foundational approach suggests that preservice teachers need to be prepared to work in diverse and changing contexts. They need to be able to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of different students and communities. Coffey, Fitchett, and Farinde (2015) suggest that preservice teachers should critically reflect on the relationship between race, gender, class, and education. They also argue that teacher education programs should foster an appreciation for diversity of cultural, linguistic, sexual orientation, class, gender, physical abilities, and learning styles. Taylor and Sobel (2003) agree, stating that today teachers must "address factors of culture, language, ethnicity, race, ability, gender, socioeconomic level, religion, age, and sexual orientation" (p. 249). They also argue that teacher education programs should focus on intercultural, multilingual, and inclusive schooling.

Kapustka, Howell, Clayton, and Thomas (2009) found that some teacher education programs include specific frameworks for addressing diversity and inclusion. For example, one program requires candidates to demonstrate "understanding and appreciation of differences by working sensitively and productively with issues of gender, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, language, and race" (p. 500). The program also requires candidates to "confront and challenge systems, structures, and practices that disadvantage students because of their race, class, religion, gender, or sexual orientation." (p. 500).

These studies suggest that it is important for teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds. This includes understanding the different factors that can affect students' learning, such as their race, class, ethnicity, language, and culture. It also includes being able to create a classroom environment that is inclusive and welcoming to all students (Pugach, Gomez-Najarro & Matewos, 2019).

Third, the post-foundational teacher education suggests that preservice teachers need to be prepared to engage in social justice work. They need to be aware of the ways in which power and privilege operate in schools and society, and they need to be prepared to challenge these systems.

For Enterline, Cochran-Smith, Ludlow, and Mitescu (2008) teaching as an activity that is related to deep underlying assumptions and beliefs about race, class, gender, disability,

and culture and the idea that issues related to culture, equity and race ought to be part of what is speakable and visible in all aspect of the curriculum. (p. 276)

Giroux and McLaren (1987) argue that teacher education should be seen as a form of cultural politics. This means that teacher education should prepare preservice teachers to understand the political dimensions of education and to use their knowledge and skills to create a more just and equitable society.

One way to do this is to explore power issues in the post-foundational teacher education. This includes exploring the ways in which power relations operate in schools and society, the ways in which language, history, and culture are used to construct and maintain power, and the ways in which teachers can participate in social and political action to challenge injustice.

By exploring political issues in teacher education, preservice teachers can develop a critical understanding of the world and their role in it. They can also develop the skills and knowledge they need to be effective agents of change.

CONCLUSION

Theorizing identity is a complex challenge. As teacher educators, we cannot make simple assumptions about a student's identity based on their membership in a particular social group. Instead, we need to develop a way of thinking about identity that allows us to consider all of the complexities of a student's identity. (Eryaman & Bruce, 2015)

Intersectionality is a useful framework for the post-foundational teacher education in order to understand the complex ways in which different socio-cultural identities, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, intersect to construct unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It is a dynamic and relational framework, rather than a hierarchical one, which means that it recognizes that the different dimensions of oppression are interconnected and that they can reinforce each other (Pugach, Gomez-Najarro & Matewos, 2019).

Traditional teacher education approaches have often essentialized student identity and difference, viewing students as belonging to a single, fixed group. This has led to a narrow view of student learning and has limited the ways in which teachers can meet the needs of all students.

New discourses, such as post-foundational teacher education, offer a way to move away from this essentialized view of student identity. Post-foundational teacher education recognizes that students have multiple identities that intersect in complex ways. This means that students cannot be understood or taught in isolation from their multiple identities.

Educators, policy makers and researchers need to engage in extended public discourse about how the identities of preservice teacher and teacher educator are portrayed in relation to social justice.

They need to discuss how intersectionality and other identity-related frameworks can help us to recognize how identity is formed.

The goal of a post-foundational discourse in teacher education is to help us to better understand the complex ways in which students learn and to develop more effective pedagogical practices. By moving away from an essentialized view of student identity, we can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

REFERENCES

Coffey H. M., Fitchett P. G., Farinde A. A. (2015). It takes courage: Fostering the development of critical, social justice-oriented teachers using museum and project-based instruction. *Action in Teacher Education*, 37(1), 9-22.

Crenshaw K. W. (1994). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In Fineman M. A., Mykitiuk R. (Eds.), *The public nature of private violence* (pp. 93-118). New York, NY: Routledge.

Dhamoon R. K. (2011). Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64, 230-243.

Enterline S., Cochran-Smith M., Ludlow L. H., Mitescu E. (2008). Learning to teach for social justice: Measuring change in the beliefs of teacher candidates. *The New Educator*, 4, 267-290.

Eryaman, M.Y. (2008). *Teaching as practical philosophy*. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

Eryaman, M. Y. & Bruce, B. C. (Eds.) (2015). *International Handbook of Progressive Education*. New York: Peter Lang.

Eryaman, M. Y. & Riedler, M. (2009). From interpretive progressivism to radical progressivism in teacher education: Teaching as praxis. In M. Y. Eryaman (Ed.). *Peter McLaren, education, and the struggle for liberation*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Giroux, H. & McLaren, P. (1987). Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. In M. Okazawa-Ray; J. Anderson and R. Traver (Eds.), *Teaching, teachers and teacher education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review. pp. 157–182.

Hancock A. M. (2007). When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining intersectionality as a research paradigm. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5, 63-79.

Howe, K. (1986). A conceptual basis for ethics in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(3), 5–12.

Kapustka K. M., Howell P., Clayton C. D., Thomas S. (2009). Social justice in teacher education: A qualitative content analysis of NCATE conceptual frameworks. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 42, 489-505.

Noddings, N. (1988). The ethics of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. American Journal of Education, 96, 215–229.

Pugach, M. C., Gomez-Najarro, J., & Matewos, A. M. (2019). A Review of Identity in Research on Social Justice in Teacher Education: What Role for Intersectionality? *Journal of Teacher Education*, *70*(3), 206–218.

Riedler, M. & Eryaman M.Y. (2016). Complexity, Diversity and Ambiguity in Teaching and Teacher Education: Practical Wisdom, Pedagogical Fitness and Tact of Teaching. *International Journal of Progressive Education*. 12(3): 172-186

Taylor S. V., Sobel D. M. (2003). Rich contexts to emphasize social justice in teacher education: Curriculum and pedagogy in professional development schools [Special Issue: Partnering for Equity]. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 36, 249-258.