Yael Ohana
Hendrik Otten (Eds.)

Where Do You Stand?

Intercultural Learning and Political Education in Contemporary Europe

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Table of Contents

Foreword

Cem Özdemir

A quarter of a century ago, the Institute for Applied Communication Research in Non-formal Education (IKAB) published a book entitled *'Acculturation of Young Foreigners in Germany'*. The book was introduced by the then-Federal Ombudswoman for the integration of foreign workers and their families, Liselotte Funcke. In her preface, she critiqued the public debate about immigration for being overly focused on controlling migration and promoting the return 'home' of migrants, while under-appreciating their social and cultural integration.

25 years have since passed and, nevertheless, we are faced with the question of whether the public discourse has really evolved substantially. Is it, today, generally accepted that all people have the right to live in equality and diversity and that the 'Other' is fully appreciated? Is the 'Other' seen primarily as a (potential) citizen, or do skin colour and headscarf matter most? Does *Leitkultur*, a dominant culture assimilating the 'Other', or republicanism predominate? And how do formal and non-formal education help to make democracy thrive in heterogeneous, ethnically and religiously pluralist societies?

The contributors to this book address these and other pressing questions concerning the nature and quality of social relations in multicultural societies, and the role of education therein. Their different disciplines, backgrounds and biographies notwithstanding, they have one thing in common – their evaluation of the current situation in relation to the questions posed is rather sceptical. They argue, therefore, in favour of a new understanding of intercultural learning that places more emphasis on active education for democracy.

Everyday life provides numerous examples of the considerable potential for conflict in European societies, especially when it comes to equal opportunities and participation. Violence occurs, exclusion and discrimination persist. Politics faces the urgent task of creating conditions for society to become more permeable, for young people to receive support whatever their social background and to find perspectives for their lives.

In multicultural societies, education must not serve economic prosperity only; it should equally contribute to democracy and civil society. Prosperity, democracy and education are closely intertwined. The nature and conditions of contemporary societies make it imperative that learning and education assume a political role and include intercultural dimensions, as this book discusses from new angles.

Democracy can only be 'learned' democratically. Educational approaches must be compatible and coherent with their contents, as the contributions to this book illustrate. It would be helpful and constructive if further debates on multi-cultural societies, on culture and identity, on equality and difference, would draw on the ideas presented by the contributions to this book.

Cem Özdemir is Co-chair of the German Green Party

To be an irreproachable member of a flock of sheep, first of all, one must be a sheep.
Albert Einstein

Um ein tadelloses Mitglied einer Schafherde sein zu können, muß man vor allem ein Schaf sein.
Albert Einstein

Introduction & Acknowledgements

Yael Ohana & Hendrik Otten (Editors)

Intercultural learning at an impasse?

This book, the 7th published by the Applied Communication Research in Non-formal Education (IKAB) to date, takes up the many and often controversial debates about the nature, content, methods and political significance of intercultural education and learning in and for the multicultural society and the European youth field. Many recent articles and papers have critiqued the apparent depoliticisation of intercultural learning in the context of the European youth field, and especially in the programmes of the European Commission and the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe over the last several years. Others have treated questions of the quality of intercultural learning and its general utility for education and society. Others still have challenged the way in which intercultural learning methodology does or does not succeed in translating key concepts into learning experiences.

Ongoing debates about the changed conditions of contemporary multicultural societies, and the failure of state policies to integrate people deemed from elsewhere in inclusive, just and empowering ways, point to the need for renewed and revised ways of conceptualising and implementing intercultural learning in the context of youth work in Europe, and even further afield. At the same time, the elevation of 'intercultural dialogue' to panacea for all societal problems, from civil war to educational failure, is putting the mobilisational value of intercultural learning to the test.

This book takes its starting point from the long-standing commitment of IKAB to the pursuit of quality in political and intercultural education – from conceptualisation to delivery. Over its more than thirty years of operation, IKAB has regularly published on this theme, making its modest contribution to the development of the field. Over the years, it did so with a certain sense of optimism. However, the contemporary social and political discourse in relation to the multicultural society has deteriorated like never before and some of that optimism has necessarily given way to disappointment and resignation. More than 30 years of hard work in developing theoretically grounded practice for intercultural interaction among young people, does not seem to have brought us closer to the ideal of the democratic society or of the democratic and integrated Europe we have always been committed to. Furthermore, the discourse around all things intercultural, including education and youth work, seems to have come to some-

thing of an impasse. While the mid-2000s saw a flurry of interest in understanding the potential of intercultural education for social mobilisation and change, this interest seems to have fallen off in the wake of concerns about the economic integration and wellbeing of young people as a result of the economic crisis and other effects of the global neoliberal age.

This book is, therefore, an attempt to reclaim and reassert the mobilisational value of intercultural education for the multicultural society and for the vision of a democratic Europe, as grand as that aim may seem. A full-scale publication bringing together retrospectives and latest thinking on this theme specifically thought through for the European youth field has not appeared recently, despite the many excellent punctual contributions to thinking about intercultural education that have appeared occasionally over the last several years, in the form of discussion papers, blog posts and articles. On the one hand, the time seems ripe for more recognition of the added value of intercultural educational approaches. On the other hand, this will only be a legitimate exercise if it is self-reflective and self-critical, taking into account the many pitfalls and inadequacies of the conceptual development and practice in this educational field, and if it makes an effort to be a vehicle for educational renewal and improvement.

The contributions to this book

The present book is organised in three distinct but related parts, combining guest contributions and pieces written by the editors. It is, therefore, neither a classical edited volume nor monograph, but something in between.

Part I, entitled 'Retrospectives', looks back at IKAB's history of thinking and writing on themes related to intercultural education and presents summaries of a selection of key texts previously published in the IKAB series. These are supplemented and complemented with commentary comparing the perspectives presented by the original author from the point in time when the original piece was written with contemporary perspectives from the same or other authors currently working on the issue.

In 'Political Education: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?' Paul Kloosterman considers how so much has changed and yet somehow seems to have remained the same in international youth work when looking back to 1985 from the position of 2011. One of the central messages of Hendrik Otten's 'On the Political Didactics of Intercultural Learning *(Zur politischen Didaktik interkulturellen Lernens – Ein Planungskonzept für internationale Jugendarbeit)*[1]

[1] Otten, Hendrik (1985). *Zur politischen Didaktik interkulturellen Lernens. Ein Planungskonzept für internationale Jugendarbeit*. Opladen, Leske + Budrich.

was that international youth work was overly focused on harmonising opposing positions and on the avoidance of conflicts and did not consider contemporary (or even historical) political conflicts and issues of social change sufficiently. In his opinion, a common understanding among practitioners of international youth work as concerns the 'why' and 'what for' of intercultural learning has not emerged, and yet the importance of the intercultural competencies described by Otten in 1985 (tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, critical thinking, role distance) seems only to grown. Our societies are constantly changing, so our education systems (formal and non-formal, including youth work) must change with the times. Kloosterman concludes that in order to do that, education needs to critically and creatively work with the political contexts and realities in which it is conducted.

Sabine Hahn and Dieter Emig reconsider questions pertaining to the 'integration' of young 'foreigners' from the contemporary perspective on 'integration practice' through counselling services in Germany. In their commentary on 'Acculturation of Young Foreigners in the Federal Republic of Germany – Problems and Concepts' *(Akkulturation junger Ausländer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Probleme und Konzepte)* by Werner Treuheit & Hendrik Otten[2] entitled '25 Years Later – Or On the Sustainability of a Social Scientific Approach to Counselling', Hahn and Emig find striking the extent to which the issues at stake in 'integration' for young people with 'foreign' backgrounds in Germany have been narrowed down – from 'integration' as a matter of the development of a just multicultural society, based on mutual respect in human dignity, to 'integration' as a matter of the survival of society, as if those young foreigners would be a threat to cohesion. They ask the question of why, when relevant methodological models and instruments for 'migration counselling' based on intercultural learning have been developed and successfully tested as far back as the mid-1980s, these have never been mainstreamed. Hahn and Emig conclude that the concept and praxis of political intercultural education then proposed could reinvigorate current discussions on the practice of 'integration' in Germany and further afield, but in order for that to happen, it must be treated as more than just an intellectual game.

In 'Back to the Future: A Few Words of Encouragement for Petra Sternecker's "Cultural Identity and Intercultural Learning"', Antonius Holtmann rediscovers what he considers to have been an under-recognised contribution to thinking the intercultural in relation to education. In his opinion, Sternecker's attempt to develop a 'critical intercultural development pedagogy' grounded in Critical Theory was ambitious but not naïve, and could be constructive in the

[2] Treuheit, Werner and Otten, Hendrik (1986). *Akkulturation junger Ausländer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Probleme und Konzepte*. Opladen, Leske + Budrich.

contemporary global debate – despite the continued and extremely negative contemporary world situation and climate characterised by 'clash of civilisations' thinking, neoliberal hegemony, war and oppression. Sternecker's operationalisation of the basic personal qualifications for social action into an emancipatory practice for combating global injustice and inequality could form the basis of renewed consideration of that wing of political intercultural education that deals with solidarity between people in different parts of the world. This said, it is also relevant, in Holtmann's opinion to contemporary situations in Europe and many individual countries, in which questions of differences in 'cultural identity' (especially in relation to religion) have come to be so extensively problematised that hardly any constructive communication on this theme is possible any longer. Holtmann concludes his reflection with the idea that in considering such issues, one nevertheless needs to remember that while 'squaring the circle' is an impossible task and one should remain hopeful and not resign in the face of adversity.

In 'Intercultural Dialogue Today', a commentary on Jean-Marie Bergeret's 'Identity – Communication – Interaction' published in IKAB's 6th volume entitled 'Youth Policy and Youth Work in Europe *(Jugendpolitik und Jugendarbeit in Europa),*[3] Nico Meisch reflects on Jean-Marie Bergeret's statement that culture has become the battlefield for different expressions of power. In this relation, Meisch asks in which way and with which purposes are decisions made on the markers of national identity, and who is involved or not involved in the decision-making processes in question, concluding in line with Bergeret's reflections that democratic policy development requires existing structures for participation to be factually accessible to all and not only accessible in law. In his opinion, political intercultural education is necessary to ensure the awareness of all citizens of the need for active participation and to create the motivation for their engagement with such structures. However, such education needs to focus on fundamental political attitudes as well as political facts. Referring to both the European youth sector and to his own sphere of influence, in child and youth policy in Luxembourg, Meisch concludes that while intercultural learning can support and encourage participation of young people from a variety of backgrounds, including those who might be defined as disadvantaged (often enough also those who could be defined as migrant), it requires encounters on a level playing field to have a chance of succeeding. Considering the conditions of inequality in which many young people are forced to grow up in Europe, he pertinently asks whether intercultural learning is possible at all. Are equal opportunities not an absolute prerequisite for the democratic creation of a multicultural

[3] Otten, Hendrik and Lauritzen, Peter, Eds. (2004). *Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik in Europa*. Schriften des Instituts für angewandte Kommunikationsforschung. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag.

society? Meisch thinks Jean-Marie Bergeret would answer this question with a resounding yes.

In 'Eurospeak – Rhetoric, Politics and Young People in Europe', Antje Rothemund considers reflections by Peter Lauritzen on the role of non-formal education in the development of the democratic (and European) citizenship of young people in his piece entitled 'European Civil Society: An Open Societal Model for Young People in Europe?'[4]. Rothemund suggests that while Lauritzen's analysis of the ways in which globalisation and European integration have sometimes positively influenced the opportunities for young people to participate actively is certainly valid, current institutional participation arrangements for young people are inadequate to ensure their active engagement in European integration. She argues that, in fact, the fast pace at which Europe has integrated through EU enlargement and other cooperation has not been accompanied by an equally fast paced or intensive learning process between Europeans about, from and with each other. Such a learning process might also have supported the emergence of a broad societal consensus on the purpose of European integration, but this has not materialised. In this context, she points out that the onus to 'learn' is currently on young people, not on the public authorities and institutions who demand their active participation. It is young people who are expected to adapt to 'adult' driven forms of participation and decision-making, and to learn how to navigate the adult political world, if they want to have their say, let alone be heard. She also points out that those who do take the leap of faith to engage can end up alienated – from the process, from the idea of participation and from their peers. Rothemund understands political intercultural education as education for critical democratic citizenship in a pluralistic Europe, and proposes that it should be an integral part of the lifelong learning process of institutional actors at both the national and European levels. This could pave the way to more meaningful intergenerational dialogue, among other things.

In 'Rethinking Equality Again – Regression Masked as Progress', Colm O'Cinneide pessimistically concludes that the so-called 'progress' made in the field of equality in the last several years is in fact more of a regression than anything else. Revisiting his own paper entitled 'Citizenship and Multiculturalism: Rethinking Equality, Rights and Diversity in Contemporary Europe' after a period of six or more years,[5] O'Cinneide finds it striking to see how the issues it discusses have become even more salient, controversial and polarising. In presenting his analysis of the current political rhetoric surrounding equality, citizenship, fundamental rights and migration, he points out how the language of equal-

[4] Otten, Hendrik and Lauritzen, Peter, Eds. (2004). *Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik in Europa*. Schriften des Instituts für angewandte Kommunikationsforschung. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag.
[5] Ibid.

ity, non-discrimination and fundamental rights has increasingly cynically come to be used to justify measures that frame migrants as inferior and their require assimilation into the European 'norm'. In a critique of the unitary republican model citizenship, and the way it has been pitched as an antidote to arguments in favour of group rights as contained in multicultural concepts of citizenship, O'Cinneide proposes that European societies have to learn again to engage in self-criticism and to confront hypocrisy in relation to how it might be possible to adhere to different values than the European 'norm' and yet participate. In his opinion, intercultural learning is one approach to beginning that process of self-reflection. It has become more urgent than ever to develop effective strategies to ensure that young people have the chance to learn from each other in non-formal settings, free of the official ideology that is ever-present in formal educational discussions of cultural difference.

Finally, in '"Political Education"' Between Aspirations and Realities: Another Decade Bites the Dust', Lynne Chisholm explores the potentially differing meanings that the term 'political education' (*politische bildung)* can have in various European languages. In this commentary on a piece she wrote for IKAB's 6th volume entitled 'Valorising Civic Engagement: "Political Education" in a Balancing Act Between Aspirations and Realities"[6] she points out that direct translations are near impossible and less than desirable, because they cannot grasp the full extent of meaning across languages and are accompanied with extensive historical baggage. To put it mildly, 'political education' is something of a 'multilingual connotative minefield'. Looking back at what she wrote back then, Lynne Chisholm is not unhappy with its accuracy. Nevertheless, developments in and around Europe since then have not all been encouraging – despite some advances in the consolidation of national and international youth policies, Europe has witnessed stagnation in the integration project, a lack of solidarity with itself in the face of financial crisis, natural catastrophes with global consequences, myriad expressions of poverty and violence, all transmitted live via the Internet and fears of successive invasions of European and non-European immigrants. In response to the fact that young people do not use their vote (and when they do, many vote for right wing populist parties) and to fears about the potential for radical youth protest, voting ages are being lowered, community participation projects are being organised, youth representation in European and international policy making is being consolidated and young people are being drafted in to civic and voluntary service (not least also to ensure essential public services). Chisholm sees an emerging paradox in relation to 'political education': while it gets more attention than ever, its meanings have become even more

[6] Ibid.

diffuse. It has become one of the ways to address these (Europe's) problems. What should it be about? In Chisholm's opinion, 'political education' should become a point of crystallisation for gaining more coherent perspectives on such pressing issues and for making greater sense of where we (would like to) stand in relation to these challenges and concerns. 'Political education' is a key element of the balancing act between aspirations and realities.

In Part II, entitled 'Contemporary Reflections', we present four in-depth articles exploring the main controversies and challenges populating the debate about political intercultural education, in general, and in the context of the European youth sector.

In 'Intercultural Education – Learning Empathy to Transgress', Teresa Cunha & Rui Gomes consider ways in which the several decades of intercultural learning practice accumulated through the youth programmes of the European institutions can be put to best use for its further development and for ensuring its continued relevance. They argue that intercultural learning has played a key role in non-formal education processes with young people, especially those associated with the programmes and activities of the Council of Europe and of the European Commission. The main purpose of intercultural learning – to inflect ethnocentric perspectives, to fight prejudices and to promote solidarity actions that support equality in human dignity and respect for the plurality of cultural identities – remains fully valid and more relevant than ever in European societies, which have become ever more intertwined and interdependent with the rest of the world. Cunha & Gomes' contribution restates the key premises on which intercultural learning has been developed in the European youth field, explores current challenges and proposes a renewed critique of its contemporary concepts and practices with the aim of (re)valorising its potential for social transformation. They also explore the relationship between intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue and argue that the former should be understood as the necessary educational approach for ensuring the latter.

In 'Intercultural Education From a Global Perspective: Caught between Universalism and Contextualisation', Ditta Dolejšiová considers the ways in which Europe and other continents (especially Latin America) might learn from each other in relation to intercultural education's conceptualisation and practice. She argues that, while intercultural education outside Europe represents a great diversity of educations, it can be observed that the practice of intercultural education takes place in a rather implicit manner, as it is often mixed and flavoured with other types of education for citizenship, human rights, gender or environmental awareness. In an attempt to understand diversity in a non-imposing, and yet quite political manner, intercultural education addresses issues of discrimination, racism and intolerance in very subtle ways. Difference is often discussed,

but in relatively mono-cultural nationality-based and rather traditional societies such as certain of those in Latin America and Africa, principle differences between people relate to being a woman or a man, homosexual or heterosexual, having darker or less dark skin, or eventually being a total mixture in terms of background and ancestry. At the same time and somewhat paradoxically, those concerned are more often than not equally poor and vulnerable. She proposes that unlike in Europe, intercultural education does not have its own well-defined methodology focused on training specific intercultural learning abilities and competencies. Yet intercultural education is characterised by a non-hierarchical process, in which all participants, including the facilitators, learn together in dialogue and reflect on issues of difference by exchanging perspectives, challenging attitudes and discussing values. This dialogue is not neutral, as it is influenced by political discourses, dogmas and established morals, which altogether often form something of an esoteric mix. Dolejšiová poses pertinent questions: How does this contribute to the quality of intercultural education delivered? In which ways does it consider the global context? In which ways can or does it stimulate engagement and political action? Her contribution discusses the value of and challenges posed by intercultural education in a non-European context for the broader debate on its development.

In 'A School for Democracy? Civil Society and Youth Participation in the Multicultural Europe', Joerg Forbrig assesses the extent to which civil society has lived up to its promise as a school for democracy by engaging young people and acting as a platform for their political education and participation. Much has been written over the last decades about the potential of civil society to reinvigorate European democracies. The youth field also has high expectations of this realm of self-organising groups of citizens, public debate, and intermediary organisations linking individuals, society and the state. For young people, in particular, civil society seems to offer a much-needed alternative to conventional, formal and adult-driven political institutions, and a hopeful channel of engaging youth in local, national and European democratic life. Forbrig argues, however, that reality shows that the promise of civil society is yet to be met. His contribution first discusses the conceptual grounds that have fuelled such great expectations towards civil society. It outlines several key functions that civil society is considered to play vis-à-vis democracy, all of which are significant for the potential participation of young people. In the second part of his contribution, Forbrig presents readers with a reality-check, demonstrating that despite some positive impulses, civil society has not generated a boost in the public participation of young people to date. This sobering record is due to a number of factors including the largely subordinate position, in which much of European civil society remains towards the state, a strong project and utility orientation where processes

and values should be central, and a legacy of traditional and hierarchical structures in many civic structures. Finally, Forbrig considers how some of these obstacles can be overcome in order for civil society to become a serious venue for youth engagement. It argues that civic structures broadly need to break out of the technocratic non-profit corner they often occupy, understand again their own role and potential in public life, acknowledge changing social realities, and reintroduce politics – understood here as pluralism, discussion and compromise – to their internal and external functioning. Only then will civil society become a meaningful and beneficial venue for the participation and political intercultural education of young people.

In 'After the "Failed experiment": Intercultural Learning in a Multicultural Crisis', Gavan Titley presents a profound critique of (in)adequacy of intercultural learning in the European youth field and beyond, in relation to the current multicultural reality. According to Titley, the confident centrality of intercultural learning in European non-formal education has dissolved under a range of pressures. Regardless of the different and often disparate practices that compose this field, its central ideas and assumptions have been criticised for reducing politics to an over-determining idea of culture, and wider political struggles to comforting templates of individualised action. From a different political starting point, intercultural learning has been dismissed as a product of misguided European multiculturalism, a multiculturalism that now needs to be disciplined by a resurgent focus on core, national values, and liberal triumphalism. And perhaps most tellingly, interculturalism has been easily sutured to the shifting surfaces of neoliberal culture, and is now a standard operating practice for global agencies, from transnational corporations to neo-imperial armies. Titley further argues that interculturalism can be reconstituted as political education only by unpicking the ways in which it has been shaped by *post-political* ideas and assumptions. Central to this is considering the immanence of *post-racism* in much intercultural education – the assumption that racism is an aberration in Western societies, and that what it requires is forms of individual reflection and remedy. Instead of explaining and containing others in terms of their 'culture', Titley argues, intercultural education can learn to think politically and contextually, and invite young activists to work in solidarity with the ways in which racialised and marginalised young people understand both their own situation, and their own forms of action and mobilisation.

In Part III entitled 'Perspectives' Yael Ohana & Hendrik Otten (editors) ask the question whether the European youth sector needs a new intercultural education concept. In the first part of their contribution, they explore philosophical and theoretical considerations in relation to the conceptual grounding of political intercultural education, its relation with the situation of interculturalism in

Europe and its potential relevance in contemporary multicultural societies. Taking into account the guest contributions made in Part II, they propose that intercultural education can only be effective in facing up to contemporary challenges and demands if it construes itself as open-ended, critical and political – in other words, if it is grounded in social realities, considers and actively confronts issues of human rights and justice, actively empowers for collective social action and contributes concretely to the 'democratisation of democracy'. In the second part of their contribution, Ohana & Otten discuss the potential implications of the theoretical explorations undertaken for political intercultural education and youth work in Europe in four distinct but interlinked respects – in relation to what intercultural education is and should be used for, in other words, its purposes and aims; in relation to its contents, in other words, the issues, themes and situations it does and should address; in relation to how it is conducted, in other words, the methodology and methods currently used or that could be used in the future; and finally, in terms of competencies that those facilitating intercultural education need to have.

Acknowledgements

Seven years have passed since the last volume in the IKAB series appeared – Hendrik Otten & Peter Lauritzen, 'Youth Work and Youth Policy in Europe' (*Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik in Europa*). This 7th volume can no longer be formally published as part of an IKAB series, as IKAB is not in a position to meet the conditions set by publishers today for having its own series, in terms of the number of publications and the regularity with which they must appear. It is noteworthy that this volume required significantly more time and effort than any of the previous publications in IKAB's series. This is not only a consequence of the fact that the editors had to take over a more significant number of responsibilities than in the case of previous publications. It is also the consequence of a new phenomenon: it has become significantly more difficult to find colleagues that are actively engaging with the theme of political intercultural education and learning at the intersection of theory and praxis, at the heart of IKAB's previous publications and in its broader educational and policy related work, and that share with the editors and each other a common concern for this theme as an important element of contemporary social and political discourse. Reflection on what can be imagined as the 'good' development process and form for a just multicultural society, for the 'democratisation of democracy', is a lifelong project requiring constant effort and energy, an 'intergenerational' project, because the 'final' form and content of such can never be attained nor achieved and because all justifications and arguments pertaining to such must be time and again

revised and reviewed and rethought through discourse. It is encouraging that in this volume we can see that some of the 'oldies' have stuck with it, and that some members of the 'next generation' have gotten well stuck in.

Writing and editing can be something of a thankless pursuit, if one has to do it by oneself. We would, therefore, like to thank all those who have accompanied us through the ups and downs of preparing this book, and who have offered help, support and sometimes solace. First and foremost, thanks are due those of IKAB's friends who have devoted of their time and creativity, once again, to contribute pieces to this publication – Lynne Chisholm, Teresa Cunha, Ditta Dolejšiová, Dieter Emig, Joerg Forbrig, Rui Gomes, Sabine Hahn, Antonius Holtmann, Paul Kloosterman, Nico Meisch, Colm O'Cinneide, Cem Özdemir, Antje Rothemund and Gavan Titley. Thank you, contributors! Without you there could have been no book! Gratitude is also due to IKAB's members, its board and staff for their eternal patience in approving several changed concepts and countless revised timetables for the production of the book. Sigrid Otten deserves special mention for making sure that all we had to do was think and write during two productive writing weeks in Nohn. Thanks also go to Gudrun Küthe for her translations to English of texts originally written or published in German. For his willingness to pitch in and provide his support on the more mundane tasks, and for his technical expertise with desktop publishing, we would like to thank Andreas Karsten. For putting up with our moods when faced with disappointment, disenchantment and the inevitable writer's block we would like to thank those closest to us. And for the inspiration and motivation to do this one more time, we would like to make special mention of two friends, sadly no longer with us and sorely missed, Peter Lauritzen and Jean-Marie Bergeret.

Part I: Retrospectives

On the Political Didactics of Intercultural Learning – A Planning Concept for International Youth Work

Hendrik Otten

Zur politischen Didaktik interkulturellen Lernens – Ein Planungskonzept für internationale Jugendarbeit

(Band 1: Otten 1985)

This piece is an extract from the introductory chapter of the first publication in the IKAB series published in 1985 and entitled 'On the Political Didactics of Intercultural Learning – A Planning Concept for International Youth Work'. Otten begins with a general critique of the contemporary practice of political education conducted at the international level. Since the 2nd World War, political education has, more often than not, been normatively-ontologically and partially empirically-analytically conceptualised, if it has been grounded in theory at all. Of primary importance has been the formal notion of pluralism, in which 'every political position must find its place'. So organised, political education at the international level refers primarily to national norms and the political positions within national party systems. The everyday educational experience in such activities is almost exclusively based on the methodological organisation of what young people need to learn from an ethical and cognitive point of view. Hence, intercultural learning and, its individual constituent concepts, has been primarily understood as a methodological challenge, with the objective of equalising opposing positions, reconciliation, ensuring peace and the creation of mutual understanding between people/s, without that such objectives and processes would be politically legitimated or considerate of real situations. In Otten's estimation, characteristic of this 'harmonising political education' approach is a lack of explanation and an overestimation of its own educational value.

Some development has been observed over time. Political education's attempts to contribute to the development of competence for life in pluralist societies has tendentially improved its theoretical grounding. At the same time, critical self-reflection (in terms of effectiveness and utility) has largely remained absent. Societal critique has been limited to the demonstration of possible contradictions between claims for freedom and rights and the social reality, and to the criticism of a lack of attention and adherence to humanistic values. For the most part, challenging social conflicts and discussions of social change remain taboo. It is for this reason that political education on the international level as

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practiced so far has not been able to react adequately the multicultural nature of European societies, as exemplified by the presence of foreign 'guest workers' in a country like Germany.

Against this backdrop and in the broad context of critical theory, Otten develops a didactic of intercultural learning for European and international youth work, understood as political education, and based in a theory of action that systematically takes into account a subject-object dialectic. Accordingly,

> "Political education can only be effective when it accepts that thought, action and perception is *subjectively* coloured, because *subject-less* thought, action and perception are not possible. The same fact will necessarily be interpreted in different ways (…). When subjective and objective factors have a meaning, then political action must be possible to legitimate it."[7]

In relation to intercultural learning processes this means that the subject of learning (i.e. the participant) stands in the centre of the learning process and must have a series of qualifications for action, of which the capacity for meta-communication can be considered the most important, because intercultural learning is not only concerned with specific contents, but also with a reflection about the subjective conditions and structures that the learning process creates. In other words, intercultural learning is also learning for attitudinal change and broader capacities and opportunities for perception and action.

Intercultural learning as political learning demands critical perception of the societal reality. This takes place on the basis of subjective interpretation, following the subject-object-change relationship outlined above. For this reason, intercultural learning begins, for Otten, with the confrontation of the primary living conditions of the participants and their own experiences.

> "Everyday knowledge and everyday practice depend on direct relationships with situations of interaction and provide the basic direction for the everyday lives of people. They are the determining factors for the intercultural pedagogy we want to promote, because they are based on a subject-object dialectic, that must be lived and reflected upon (…) In this way, the politically active subject stands in the foreground of the learning process: the learning field itself is political, and can be constructed and legitimated by the participants – in relation to the contents that learners find relevant, to the behaviour of learners in the process and to the relationship between the two. In cooperation with educators, the field of social learning is created."[8]

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[7] Otten, Hendrik (1985). *Zur politischen Didaktik interkulturellen Lernens. Ein Planungskonzept für internationale Jugendarbeit*. Opladen, Leske + Budrich.
[8] Ibid.

In an attempt to contribute to bridging the gap between previous theories of political education and their practice in international youth work, Otten proposes a practical planning concept for international youth work in five phases, grounded in the theoretical foundations outlined above, through which successful educational experiences can be achieved because this kind of social learning enables learners to experience cultural difference through attitudes, perceptions and behaviour; meta-communication about these experiences and the fundamental functional mechanisms of learning takes place; and the young people gain access to opportunities for self-realisation and social integration through group situations in which the young people deal with uncertainty in an effective manner and through which their self-esteem is improved.

Political Education: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?

Paul Kloosterman

Hendrik Otten wrote 'On the Political Didactics of Intercultural Learning' in 1985. That was the year the Live Aid concerts took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and London to raise fifty million pounds for Ethiopia. In that same year Michael Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Commodore introduced the Amiga personal computer to the public and Greenland left the European Communities. In 1985, Heinrich Böll, the German writer, and Simone Signoret, the French actress, both died. The world population in 1985 was just under 5 billion. In 2011, world population will have reached 7 billion.

In 1985, I was working as a consultant for a provincial youth work institute in the Netherlands. By that time, intercultural issues had begun to pop up here and there. The first 'Turkish' youth workers got jobs at local youth centres – a positive development that was welcomed enthusiastically by 'Dutch' youth workers, the local administrations and the Turkish young people who were visiting the youth centres. In 1985, the Turkish community was the largest minority in the Netherlands.

After a few months our institute began to receive telephone calls from the youth centres with requests for advice and counselling. Almost without exception, they were experiencing team conflicts between the Turkish and the Dutch youth workers. There were three main points of conflict: the punctuality, or lack thereof, of the Turkish youth workers for team meetings; that the Turkish youth workers did not always stick to the agreements made in the team; and how to deal with the position of the Turkish girls and young women in the youth centre. With the Dutch youth workers, the counselling meetings we organised mostly focused on helping them to understand the different backgrounds in play, and to deal with their own personal values and limits. For the Turkish youth workers, who for the most part were 'alone' – in other words, one among a team of several Dutch youth workers, these issues were also discussed, but in addition they faced the challenge of dealing with the interests of the Turkish community, which saw them as 'their' representative. Basically, these were conflicts between two cultures – a dominant and a minority culture.

One of Hendrik Otten's main messages is that in 1985 intercultural learning in international youth work focused primarily on harmonising and equalising opposing positions and on avoiding conflicts. It did not extensively deal with

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