Teaching local history with the use of De Bono's Six Thinking Hats, brainstorming; and role play in primary school, multicultural classes- an example of application in Greek school

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an example of an intercultural teaching practice of cultivating of critical thinking and intercultural/ historical literacy in the context of local history learning. The practice was created by the author in the framework of the European eTwinning project "The young time travelers of history" (which was awarded with the Greek National Quality Label and the European one) and was presented as an example of good practice in teacher seminars at the local level. This practice combines a simplified form of De Bono's Six Thinking Hats with role-playing and brainstorming and emerged from the study of the social-historical background of a primary school multicultural class in which was implemented. Finally, this specific study aims to be an example for the creation of other innovative, alternative teaching practices in local history learning.

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural teaching is an approach that cultivates the dynamic and fair interaction between individual cultural groups of a wider social group with the ultimate goal of creating similar ones expressions of culture through dialogue and mutual respect (Unesco, 2006; Baros, Stergiou & Hatzidemou, 2014). Its goal is to build knowledge and competence that contribute to the smooth symbiosis with the shaping of society members' identity (Cummins, 2005; Nikolaou G., 2005; Manousopoulou, 2007). The intercultural learning model aims to manage groups' or individuals' ethno-cultural differences of coexisting in multicultural societies (Dragona, 2007) and aims to provide equal opportunities in society and in education, as well (Katsikas & Kavadias, 2000). It seeks the meeting of cultures, considering cultural otherness wealth. According to Essiger (1990) empathy, solidarity, intercultural respect, fight against stereotypes and ethnocentrism way of thinking are pervasive. Intercultural teaching is a continuous process of change, of reforming (transforming) and interaction among people from different cultural backgrounds (Belesi, 2009). The aim of intercultural teaching is to succeed to transcend the logic of separation, to effectively oppose ethnocentric way of thinking, to succeed in deconstructing prejudices and stereotypes, so that people from different cultures are able to interact, to communicate honestly; and to cultivate their intercultural empathy. Such a didactic one framework aims to alleviate social inequalities, to provide equal opportunities for all, in overcoming dividing lines, in elimination of xenophobia and racism (Karountzou, 2011; Pantazis, 2015). As far as teaching of history is concerned, it is recommended its unifying role to be taken advantage of, prioritizing its local, its social; and its cultural aspect, so that students are aware of people's form other cultures history

experiences and beliefs and so that students' historical empathy to be cultivated (Slater, 1995). Therefore the basis of this research is to present a teaching practice that approaches local history issues through the cultivation of critical thinking.

As far as recent studies in the area of the focus problem is concerned, there are some that indicate the value in teaching of the use of De Bono's Six Thinking Hats method, the role play method and the brainstorming method. For instance, as for De Bono De Bono's Six Thinking Hats, studies indicate the pedagogy contribution of the practice in effectively teaching students of how to think critically and to engage them in problem solving in a colourful and entertaining way (Kivunja, 2015). Also the effect of conducting De Bono's Six Thinking Hats activity on developing paragraph writing skills is analyzed in a corresponded study (Swamy et.al, 2019). Regarding the role play, researchers concluded that drama based strategies have positive impact on student motivation and understanding of thinking like a historian to middle school social studies courses. This teaching approach combines the skills needed for students to be developed into independent decision-makers within a student- centered classroom environment that promotes social interaction along with problem solving competence (Cochran, 2015). Finally, there are studies that prove the growing imaginative creativity of students with the use of brainstorming as method in history learning (Nur Utami et.al, 2021).

This study comes in the line of the other studies and aims to present a combination of these three methods focused in primary level multicultural classes, so that they are easily adapted to the social- historical background of each class and achieve the required inclusion and intercultural/ historical literacy. The method that is proposed by this study was created and was implemented in the context of the eTwinning project «The young time travelers of history» during the school year 2013- 2014 (the project was awarded with the Greek National Quality Label and the European one).

The novelty of the research lies in the fact that it provides a simplified form of the teaching approach of De Bono's Six Thinking Hats method along with the combination of using of brainstorming and role play. This combination of the three specific methods, adapted to the local history lesson, presupposes the study of the particular historical-social conditions of each class to which it will fit and adapts itself based on them so that it can offer to students an approach of historical events from different perspectives, cultivating their historical thinking/ empathy, their argumentative discourse; and their critical thinking, utilizing their special cultural background, as well.

METHODS

Research Questions

This study moves along this line and aims to provide a specific teaching approach that answers to the following research questions: i) how historical knowledge, historical consciousness and historical empathy can be raised along with local history and the data of the specific social and cultural students' background?, ii) how local history learning is possible to create a climate of inclusion with mutual acceptance and free expression of all of social groups?, iii) is it possible for a teaching approach to cultivate students' intercultural literacy in the context of local history learning?

In order research questions to be answered and a specific teaching approach to be formed the study met the following steps:

1) Study of the historical-social background of the class:

It is essential for the teacher to know the historical and the social conditions that prevail in the area, in order to shape the practice appropriately, in order to cultivate a dynamic and a fair interaction between individual cultural groups of a wider social group with the ultimate goal of creating similar ones expressions of culture through dialogue and mutual respect (Unesco, 2006, p. 19; Baros, Stergiou & Hatzidemou, 2014).

2) Definition of the historical question (historical dilemma):

At this stage the local history must be researched in order to find a historical question (historical dilemma) which will be addressed by applying the present practice.

3) Sharing roles and thinking hats:

Based on the historical dilemma, they choose which of the thinking hats will be needed and their distribution to the students is done in a mixed way so that each color of the hats to correspond to students from all the cultural and the social backgrounds of the class.

RESULTSAND DISCUSSION

Subheadings – Level 2

The present practice was implemented in a multicultural classroom at the Elementary School of Nea Karya in the context of an intercultural, interdisciplinary European project. The class population was consisted of students with Greek citizenship (57%), of Roma students (29%), and of students from Albania (14%).
From the study of bibliography and from the study of the special social context, the practice was shaped as follows:

1) **The results from the study of the historical-social background of the class:**

In this particular case, the student population consists of students with Greek citizenship, Roma students and economic immigrant students from Albania. A study of local history revealed that the most ancient inhabitants of the area were the Roma, who were marginalized with the arrival and settlement of Greek refugees from Eastern Thrace from 1914 onwards. A conflict is observed between these two social groups, which also manifests itself in the school context. Since 2000, the arrival of economic immigrants from Albania has been observed. Relations of non-acceptance and rejection now appear among all the three social groups during their coexistence in the same area.

2) **Definition of the historical question (historical dilemma):**

In this case, the students, through research on the local history of the area, discovered that in 1946 a large flood of Nestos River (located in the area) caused the destruction of the half of the village. After this disaster, the inhabitants gradually settled in a new location (5 kilometers far away). The historical question that was raised was, putting ourselves in the shoes of the inhabitants of that time, whether all the inhabitants of the village should move, whether they should remain in the same location or whether another solution should be given?

3) **Sharing roles and thinking hats:**

According to the data of the specific historical question the students were divided into three groups and four colors of the hats were used as follows: i) white hat, which was worn by the class teacher and gave all the necessity information, ii) red hats which were worn by students who played the role of the inhabitants (half of them had their house destroyed by the flood and the others not) who were grinded more based on intuition, emotion; and instincts and expressed their feelings without having to justify them logically, iii) black hats which were worn by students who played the role of the inhabitants (half of them had their house destroyed by the flood and the others not) who were been cautious and assessing risks, employed critical judgment and explained exactly why they have concerned, iv) blue hats which were worn by students who played the role of the inhabitants that focused on controlling their thinking and managing the decision-making process, they had an agenda, they asked for summaries, and reached conclusions. They were the authorities of the village.

4) **Holding the discussion (Dialogic discussion, brainstorming, recording arguments):**

Dialogic discussion was next in which the spontaneous thoughts/arguments of the students under the way of thinking of each hat and its role were recorded. Brainstorming and spontaneous formulations

contributed to highlighting the particular cultural capital of each student and the way of thinking with which it was connected. In addition, students practiced themselves in democratic dialogue and tolerance of different points of view.

5) **Defining the proposed solutions and selecting the most acceptable one:**

Based on the dialogic discussion, the students with the blue hats proposed feasible solutions and chosen the most acceptable one after voting in which all the students participated, training themselves in democratic processes.

Figure 1. Time for voting

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The implementation of this method had positive results on students, as they were given the opportunity to get to know a topic of local history from a multi-level focus, to reflect on it, to express themselves, to empathize by putting themselves in the position of another way of thinking, to argue, to discuss, to listen and to accept others' opinion and to apply democratic procedures. Students from different socio-cultural backgrounds were also given the opportunity to interact in depth, cultivating their critical thinking and self-esteem. Finally, this kind of out-of-context teaching created strong learning incentives for students to be engaged with the whole learning process.

Suggestions/ recommendations:

This teaching approach could be applied in various multicultural classes and in varied subjects in primary level and it could be evaluated.

Research limitation

The sample of application was a small one.

Author's recommendations for further studies:

More studies should have been conducted on the way of the formation of cross-cultural, cross-curricular teaching techniques applied in specific socio-cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

the Principals of the primary schools of Nestos area of Primary Education of Kavala unit and to the 3rd School Advisor of Education Primary Education of Kavala unit (2013), iii) local history teachers' training seminar: "Implementing a local history program – methodological approaches" (2015) organized by the Primary Education of Kavala unit.

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