Some strategies emerging from research in Northern Ireland

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Dr Claire McGlynn
Queen’s University, Belfast
c.mcglynn@qub.ac.uk
Multiculturalism RIP?

1. Challenges to models of pluralistic citizenship
2. Liberal theorists: positive ideals such as liberty and equality need to be endorsed
3. Plural theorists: this creates cultural invisibility so must emphasise difference
4. Critical theorists: issues of race, class or other bias must be addressed
5. But notion of culture is contested: singular categorisation of people based on religion or culture ‘illusion of identity’ VS. communitarian social thesis
1. How to reconcile rights of individuals and groups? Navigate between ‘pluribus’ whilst promoting an ‘unum’ (Reich)

2. Recognise the ‘socialising tyranny of categorisation’ (Jenkins) and avoid scripting for cultural identity. Treat young people as evolving and autonomous

3. Sen distinguishes between approaches:
   …one which concentrates on the promotion of diversity as a value in itself… the other …on the freedom of reasoning and decision-making, and celebrates cultural diversity to the extent that it is as freely chosen as possible by the persons involved.
1. NI: emerging from 30 years conflict. Still divided, still healing, getting more diverse
2. Integrated schools (6%): educate Catholic and Protestant together
3. 10 years of qualitative study of integrated schools: impact, good practice, leadership. Comparative work in Israel and Cyprus.
4. Investigation of approaches to integration: 52 principals. Approaches are evolving…
Taxonomy of approaches
Liberal approaches

1. Liberal pro-active (9)

Deliberate emphasis on commonality:

*Integration is everyone working together, all classes and creeds. It should all be one family under one sky*

2. Liberal passive (9)

Belief that integration could happen naturally:

*Everyone is welcome…we would love to have more time on the integrated ethos but it is a bit of a luxury…*
Plural approaches

3. Plural inclusive (13)
Focus on celebrating all aspects of difference:

*We celebrate cultural diversity. You are not trying to take little loyalists and nationalists and make them Alliance voters…*

4. Plural limited (3)
Recognise ethnic minority groups and faiths, but no focus on denominational, cultural or political differences between Catholic and Protestant pupils
5. Critical (4)

Recognise and celebrate all forms of difference AND desire to tackle injustice and bias:

...school is not a neutral haven. Issues of prejudice must be addressed...we are challenged by supporting the needs of our ethnic minority pupils

You need to be comfortable with difference...This is the challenge of an increasingly multicultural society. We have to confront racist attacks
6. Liberal/plural (6)
Acknowledge cultural difference AND promote inclusive school community.

7. Liberal/critical (8)
Also seeks common ground BUT also commits to tackling injustices such as sectarianism and racism:

*An all inclusive school should be at the heart of a shared community…we have a constant awareness of anti-bias, anti-bullying and conflict resolution*
Conclusions

Wider range of approaches to integration than previously thought
Plural inclusive may reassure parents but may essentialise identity boundaries…
Liberal pro-active might help construct common ground but risks cultural invisibility…
There are some combined approaches trying to navigate between pluribus and unum
Emergent Questions

1. Political theory moving in favour of inclusive, integrationist strategies rather than separatist ones. Should education reflect this? What might this look like?

2. Can/should educational initiatives overcome the ‘socialising tyranny of categorisation’ (Jenkins)?

3. Is it better to acknowledge hybridity as a positive identity, rather than to script for a pre-determined cultural identity?

4. How can we navigate between ‘pluribus’ whilst promoting an ‘unum’ better in educational settings?
Selected References


