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Ethnicity, Cultural Differences, and National Curriculum: Possibilities and Restrictions[2]

Ιωάννινα 2004

In the modern multicultural societies ethnicity seems to be a clear concept which is used by people who define borders within societies. Some use terms related with ethnicity for processes of inclusion: In this way a defirmation of membership of a special group like Greeks, Italians, Germans is given. Others part use terms related with ethnicity with the aim of exclusion: They define those who are not members of a special group like Greeks, Italians or Germans, for example. Ethnicity is a principle which allows parts of people to differentiate them from other groups. But a closer look reveals some problems. The first aroses because the relations to nationalism are confusing, the second, because the relations with citizenship are not clear.

"The word *nation* has a variety of meanings close to country, society, or state in some instances, and close to, or synonymous with ethnic group in others" (YINGER 1994, 10). YINGER uses both terms synonymously, which is not helpful in all cases. For example, Yugoslavia was a nation state with different ethnic groups. Now after the break down of the nation state these ethnic groups are fighting for influence by the matter of ethnic cleaning. Citizenship defines membership of a nation state or a state. But the same citizenship can be given to members of different ethnic groups and it can be used as well as matter of excluding members of ethnic groups who are not members of the dominating majority. Citizenship can have different sources: In the case of nation states an important source is heritage. In the case of the Federal Republic of Germany all people who live in other states with a citizenship of the particular state have a right to get the German citizenship if they have German ancestors. In other countries citizenship is combined with the birthplace or the citizenship of the parents. Insofar members of different ethnic groups can have the citizenship of the same state. This is possible in exactly the same way in a nation state like Germany. People with a Greek Citizenship and Greek ethnicity can get the German citizenship by a particular process. But must they change their ethnicity in this process? This is an interesting question. An American who spoke not Italian but only English told me "I'm an Italian" because he traced his heritage back to Italy. With the remark "I'm an Italian" he gave an explanation for his lively gestures while speaking. Americans of Italian descentent can see themselves in this sense as more vivacious in relation to other Americans: Ethnicity is used as a matter of definition of a special subgroup of Americans. The American citizenship is not questioned as he was equally proud to have a photo of Ronald and Nancy Reagan which was signed by both.

In discussing an example like that it becomes clearer that the problem of ethnic groups or ethnicity in modern multicultural societies is not so easy as it seemed when I started my paper. Ethnicity can be seen as a psychological feature as it is the case in the example of the American with Italian heritage. But it can also be seen as a political feature if members of ethnic groups claim special rights. In my contribution I will concentrate the arguments on the political and social dimensions of the problem.

YINGER (1994, 3) has defined ethnicity in the following way: "An ethnic group is a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients." This definition will be adapted because it opens the possibility to discuss the problems of ethnicity and ethnic groups within the modern multicultural societies like Germany and avoids to confront ethnicity with nationality or citizenship. But here the ethnic dimension and meaning is not included in monoethnic countries. Perhaps some of the countries of origin may be monoethnic too. In countries like that problems with ethnicity will arise if some of the people migrate to other countries. Now a confrontation with other ethnic groups may take place comparing people in the country of origin with groups of migrants and people of an other group in the country to which the migrants migrated. An other problem may be the group of remigrants who believed that in the country of migration they could retain their ethnicity but after coming back have to experience that they are in some dimensions alien to the people in the country of origin. That is, for example, an experience of the so named "Aussiedler" in Germany who come back to Germany.

The different aspects which I have described demonstrate that ethnicity if it is defined in the sense of YINGER is not a label for a problem which is clear in its consequences. Insofar a differentiation which is given by YINGER (1994, 4) is very helpful.

Table 1

In this table the variety of meanings of ethnic identity becomes clear. In an everyday language ethnicity may be only a point of view which is given if ethnic groups are perceived by others and themselves as ethnically distinct and in addition participate in shared activities. Landscapes like "Chinatown" or "little Italy" in major American cities like ghettos or ethnic colonies support this view of ethnicity. But there are other ethnic groups who are invisible, since they are only small or their members have partly or totally decided to assimilate to the majority. Here an other point becomes dominant: Is it possible to change ethnicity? If we want to discuss this problem a differentiation may be helpful which is given by BARTH (1969). He differentiated between the ethnic boundary and culture as the content which is ethnicity given. If people cross an ethnic boundary they change ethnicity, but within a given ethnicity they can change cultural features without changing ethnicity. For example, some Turkish children and their parents in a survey said that the family language was German but still described themselves as Turks.

The differentiation between boundary and cultural content of ethnicity is helpful for my further discussions of instruction and curriculum. But at this point I have to tell more about the meaning of common culture in the context of ethnicity.

Culture is a similar difficult concept like ethnicity. But in the context of ethnicity a common culture is combined with ideas of common language, shared common activities like religiosity and in many cases a common shared heritage. Concerning all definitions of ethnic groups the last point gives the opportunity to handle the problems easily, because it can be proofed objectively. At the same time it is a problematic point because it opens the possibility to define the ethnicity of people against their own wishes. As done, for example, by the Nazis in Germany with reference to the Jews. The Nazis didn't ask for the self-definition of people or the cultural behavior of the people, their only point of interest was the heritage. Only by features of heritage they defined the membership in ethnic groups. If the only feature of ethnicity is heritage with reference to ethnic groups than the crossing of ethnic bounders is impossible. In modern societies this point of view mostly is not shared, for example, in the context of citizenship as the only reason for the

ascription of ethnicity, but in some societies it is up to now one of the best ways to define ethnic membership, for example, in Germany the so named "Aussiedler" can take this way for getting German citizenship. In everyday life for me it seems to be the most powerful aspect if membership in ethnic groups has to be decided.

Language and shared common cultural features are matters to support the meaning of ethnicity. Language in this context is a more obvious feature than shared cultural activities are. In a definition of GEERTZ other features of culture than language are norms, values, and symbols. Really important in many cases may be religiosity and an ethnic social network. Crossing an ethnic boundary may be facilitated by processes of assimilation in the dimensions of language and values especially religiosity. On the other side the stability of ethnic groups may be supported by religions fundamentalism and language. Insofar it is not surprising that conflicts often are concentrated to features which have reasons in religions customs, but in principle it is possible to cross an ethnic boundary without changes in cultural contents which are combined with the customs of an particular ethnic group. But this is improbable.

So it is obvious that as a last point the process of ethnic ascription has to be discussed. Ethnic ascription can be done by groups and by individuals. In every day life conflicts can arose if the ascription of a group and one or more particular individuals do not agree. Especially in families conflicts may arise if parents and their children do not agree referring to the ethnicity of the children. This is the context where schools as an institution in child education are an important "player" in the game of ethnic ascriptions.

The aspect of cultural differences seems after my discussion up to now to be clear but unfortunately this is not the case. At first a problem arises because group rules must not fit with individual rules and that in the cultural dimension tacit knowledge NUNAKA, TAKE, UCHI (1996) is a central feature. The rules of every day life often are not explicitly but only implicitly defined. Everybody knows what he or she has to do, but in this context everybody is in the position to define what are the customs which frame actions in the cultural sphere. Customs will be acted in an interdependency between rules of the group and individual behavior. They are changeable in this way. Within cultures do exist additionally subgroups of people who behave slightly in an other way. For example, in society such subgroups often are combined with social status. The culture of lower class people differs in some respect from the culture of upper class people. In the past differences like that were obviously accompanied by differences in the language. In

Sweden up to the beginning of the Twentieth century German was the language of the upper class. At the beginning of the 20th century German language was forbidden with the aim to unify Sweden in culture. But as a whole customs in particular can differ in many ways. Therefore besides the cultural differences between cultures we have to have a look at the cultural differences within ethnic groups. In every day life the assumption of the cultural uniformity is contrafactual. Since actually cultural variety is the normal case. So we have in the case of Turkish migrants in Germany differences in religiosity - sunnits and alewits if they are islamic, christs - in heritage - kurds and turks, for example -and so on. Therefore the meaning of language is so important: Language seems to be the only unifying principle. In Turkey itself language in schools will be used as an instrument to suppress minorities like the Kurds.

Very similar exist regional based cultural differences between people coming from South Italy and people who are North-Italian based. These examples can be continued. But in the same way cultural differences exist in the societies of the host lands to which ethnic groups migrate. These differences are partly regional based, partly they are differences which are caused by different social status of the people and so on. To learn how to behave by imitating particular members of the group of people of the host country may be therefore dangerous. It can be the wrong people who are imitated.

Cultural differences work only in the dimension of exclusion and inclusion they don't work in a way that a special behavior is needed to be included. Important in the modern industrialized societies are values as a matter of differentiation. As HOFSTEDE (1980), PASCAL, ATHOS ( ) have described for the economical area and researches like TRIANDIS and BERRY for the common cultural area. The values and value systems of societies are often influenced by religious beliefs. The white ANGLO SAXONIAN PROTESTANT system of values and beliefs which is the ruling value system in the USA is a famous example for this connection. The other ethnic groups have to assimilate to this value-system if they want to be successful. In the case of Japan a very close connection between Zen-Buddhism and the economical sector in the case of Taiwan between Konfuzionism and the economical sphere is claimed. In all cases the central assumption that the organization of successful work is caused by religious beliefs. These values systems are not special for a particular organization, these value-systems are thought as common shared values-systems within a specific culture. But the religious heritage of the value-system symbolizes as well that these value-system cannot be ethnic

bound, they are founded in religious systems and articulated in the economical sector. Therefore it may not surprise that in modern industrialized societies a strong connection exist between the religious sphere and the economical sphere. This is sometimes articulated by architecture. The arrangement of the surrounding of the World-Trade-Center in New York and the architecture of the building itself cite, for example, symbols of the architecture of churches and their surroundings. The religious bound ascetism is repeated in the architecture of economical buildings. But this type of architecture is not ethnic or nation bound, I repeat the argument. Modern cultures of the industrialized societies have that may be a conclusion from this example, elements of globalization. The English language is an other element which demonstrates globalization. Ethnic minorities in these modern societies very often come at the first view from societies with a more rural and fewer industrial character in their economy. Insofar cultures with a more global base seem to be confronted with culture on a more local base.

But if the argument of the influence of religious based value systems in the economical sphere is correct than this opposition not correct, because the religious systems of the migrants are very similar global to the religious systems of the modern industrialized societies. Insofar culture may be seen as a combination of more global and more local elements in the value systems as well as the languages. In language, for example, the global elements are part of the grammar or syntax and the local elements are part of the semantic.

Cultural differences can be localized in this view at both levels
- the global and
- the local level

The meaning of the differences in this view depends on the degree of the ability of connection. This is an expression which was created in the system-theory of LUHMANN (1984).

The explanation is up to now very abstract. To become the idea more clear we have to differentiate different sectors: In the economical area which is described in some aspects above the ability of connection is a performance which will only be expected from members of ethnic groups. They migrated with the aim to improve their economical situation. If they refuse to assimilate to the conditions of work - organization of work as well as value-systems of work - they cannot be successful in reaching the aim of

migration. Therefore they are forced to assimilate. This aim is easier to reach because in the normal case the better educated part of people of a country migrates with the aim to improve the economical base of living. This can be seen as a type of assimilation at the level of more global aspects of culture. But in opposition to this assimilation very often a religious renewal takes place. That can be seen as a movement to save the value systems in the private sphere. But unfortunately the success of such attempts cannot be sure: The arrangements of work and the value systems in this sphere influence private habits. If women for example must work because the wages are not high enough than the structure of the family may change from a patrialism to a family with more equal rights for men and women. In this way a cultural caused conflict can take place in the family.

But as a whole in the private sphere it seems easier to keep customs of the country of origin. These customs are combined with cooking, clothing, and language, for example: The local elements of the cultural value systems seem to be more stable than the more global elements. In this way an overestimation of the meaning of cultural particularity may be the case. The message of this argument is that cultural diversity is located more in the private sphere than in the public area. It seems to be easier to assimilate at the level of global elements. In these spheres the members of ethnic groups must assimilate if they want to stay and to survive in the host country. This argument may be supported by two other example: Migrants have to accept the laws of a host country and they must learn to assimilate to the customs of the public administration. In both example similar to the economical sphere global and local elements are combined. The global elements are fixed in international law. Insofar the ability of connection seems to be easy to fulfill. But here are special difficulties to expect: Laws of a state in addition have a lot of special rules, for example, with reference to marriage, family, and divorce. Therefore cultural diversity will be experienced in this sphere. The families of ethnic groups must give special support to the members to survy in an alient world. Social networks partly family based, partly within the group as a whole must be activated and especially religion - based networks can be seen as helpful.

The result of this discussion may surprise: Cultural diversity does not exist only in ethnic groups and in dominant groups in a host country. Cultural diversity will be increased in the situation of a host country within ethnic groups because the group members have to assimilate in particular spheres. This process of assimilation will start at the level of more global values. The local values of an ethnic group are more protected.

Insofar cultural diversity will be experienced especially at the level of religiosity (more global) and family (more local). But at both levels the variety within a group is large. Turks, for example, are members of different religions systems and family life is organized in Turkey with a high degree of variety. Insofar especially at the level of family there may be a similar type of ethics and of believes in subgroups of the society of the hostland as it will experience in subgroups of the ethnic group.

Cultural diversity can be experienced only by summing up different spheres of every day and/or worklife. The experience is not focused on elements but the summing up will give the impression that the others are different. Insofar the feeling to be cultural different is more abstract and not caused by special events which will be interpreted by all members of an ethnic group in an particular way and by all members of another ethnic group in another way. But if the particular person is asked for experiences of cultural differences he or she will be able to give examples: The personal experience in this way is concrete but the summing up of personal experiences will not give a picture of the existing cultural differences.

At the beginning of this part of my paper cultural diversity was seen as a major reason for the survival of ethnic differences. This argument is not wrong but the content which is of interest in this paper is another one: culture differs within ethnic groups and between ethnic groups. Therefore it is not possible to give a simple description of areas of cultural differences or concrete cultural differences which will be seen of all members of an ethnic group with reference to another group.

The above descriptions of ethnicity and cultural differences demonstrate that the consequences for national curricula have to be seen within a complex frame. The two levels of knowledge universal and local relating to cultural differences and the meaning of ethnicity relating to boundary and content have to be taken into consideration. But there are additional conditions which have to be noticed. At first the school system itself: As MEYER, KAMENS, BENAVOT (1992) have outlined the transnational similarities between the school system especially in the primary schools of the particular countries are larger than assumed on the base of individual experiences of people who migrate from one country to another. The individual experience at first is that the differences are overwhelming. This impression is caused by the alient instruction of language if students have to attend schools in a host country with another mother tongue. But as MEYER, KAMENS, BENAVOT (1992) have described the similarities at first have to be seen in

the similar status of schools: In principle they are public and financed by the government. Insofar this is an important point because in this way the public has a large influence on the organization of schools, the timetable, and the curricula. In addition, similarities are given - in schools compulsory for particular age groups

- organizing students

- graduation students by the principals of age groups and experience,

- formal examinations,

- national character of schools (for example).

These similarities in the institutional character of schools are important because they influence the contents (for example) particular examinations open the possibility to study at universities in foreign countries (RAMIREZ, BULI 1987; BENAVOT, RIDDLE 1988; MEYER, RAMIREZ, SOYSAL 1992). Another important similarity is the formal organization of instruction: Teachers are e.g. specialists in particular subjects and have to teach normally more than 20 pupils in a classroom. Variations are possible within this frame. That is, for example, the case, if in many countries in the first grade a teacher has to teach all subjects. During the school course special tracks or other types can be started.

These similarities explain that we have similarities in the timetables as well. In primary schools, for example, one part of instruction is teaching of national language. Another important part is the teaching of mathematics. The education in natural siences, in subjects of the social world and in arts education. The result of the cited study gives an impression that indeed at an abstract level of view the similarities are very large. LENHART (1993) sums up in an review that we have to recognize with in the development of curricula consensus about the cultural values which have to be taught at schools.

This result must not a surprise if we remember the similarities in the cultural sphere which I have described above.

But there is another point of view which gives another message. As GOGOLIN (1992) has remarked critically the instruction in school is only monolingual. The special needs of foreign kids may not be satisfied because they cannot understand enough in the instruction process. Another important point we have to consider is that besides the similarities in cultures-universal dimension - we have differences as well - local dimension. In the national school the interest of touches normally is only concentrated to some national local values and knowledge. The transnational dimension of this level is

not in their interests. Insofar children from other cultures hate to assimilate or acculturate in these dimensions. In this sphere difficulties will come up in the everyday national school. These difficulties at first are concentrated to language problems. Second they are focused to the variation of "normal behavior of teachers and students". Third difficulties of this type can be combined with differences in religious beliefs.

If we claim for a better intercultural education these three dimensions will be dominant. A lot of research in Germany was concentrated to language problems of migrant children and their language problems in the school. Special language instructions for migrant children and special classes for a long time were the answers of the school administration to the problem. But if the children of an minority get special classes then they have the possibility to talk in the classroom in their mother tongue. In this way the probability increases that their language problems in the language of the host country will continue. It will become more difficult for them to reach the aims of the school system and to get high qualifications in the school. The separation will go on and will continue in segregation of the next generation in dimensions of qualification.

Another way was to teach literacy in mother tongue. In this way the segregation of migrant children is placed at the beginning of schooling. If it is possible to take the mother tongue as one of the foreign languages which children have to learn in the school a good solution seems to be found. But the problem is that a lot of the particular languages of the migrant families are languages which open only a few possibilities for adults in combination with work and economy. Insofar the investment in mother tongue may be helpful if the definite decision of the families and the children is to remigrate to the homeland. But very often this is not the case.

The only possibility given the probability that the children and their families will stay in the guestland that the children need support to learn the language of the national school faster. In this area an investment is very helpful. There may be two exceptions, Spain, and Russian. But in the other cases the foreign languages are not attractive.

Another possibility is to integrate elements of the situation in the homelands and of the situation of migration in Germany, for example, in the curricula. This can be done in the context of teaching national language or the subject social world. Possibilities of this type are not used enough. Here one of the most important goals of education in the modern industrialized and multicultural societies is outlined: Integration.

If the subjects in the school do not include such aspects as integration than the multicultural society will fail. Insofar it is a challenge for education in this societies to improve the possibilities that multicultural societies can survive. But a concept of culture is needed which allows variations and differences. To teach this is the challenge of education. The curricula up to now have not included aspects like that.