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BEYOND TOLERANCE: EDUCATING FOR RELIGIOUS RESPECT AND HOSPITALITY IN PEDAGOGIC-MULTILOGICAL SANCTUARIES

Abstract

Drawing on the methodological framework of conversational analysis, this paper explores aspects of multilogical participation in pedagogically safe spaces with regard to religious respect and hospitality as life skill. I argue that these spaces should be conceived of as pedagogically justifiable and educationally guaranteed sanctuaries of and for multilogical-educative participation (i.e. teacher–learner(s) and learner–learner interaction) with regard to religious respect and hospitality.

Background and rationale

Incidences that all attest to the measure of religious intolerance that prevails in the modern world, have risen sharply in recent years. They increasingly prevent ordinary citizens in most countries in the world from openly exercising their freedom of opinion and religious expression (UNESCO, 1995, p. 2; cf. also Potgieter, Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2014, p. 1). Recent scholarly publications (cf. Van der Walt, Potgieter & Wolhuter, 2010; Van der Walt, 2011; Van der Walt & Potgieter, 2012; Potgieter, 2014; Potgieter & Van der Walt, 2014; Potgieter, Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2014; Wolhuter, Potgieter & Van der Walt, 2014) not only lament this rising tendency, but also seek, from a scientific point of view, to explore, explain and understand this worrying state of affairs.

Incidences of religious intolerance also threaten the consolidation of peace and democracy, both nationally and internationally (UNESCO, 1995, p. 2). It endangers human lives and livelihoods, and it jeopardizes civilization itself, as we know it. Law (2011, p. 207) argues, for example, that one cannot reason or argue with people who behave religiously intolerant towards people of other religious persuasions. Because the attitude, on which their religious behaviour is based, effectively amounts to mental slavery, dogmatism and repression (Morton, 1998, pp. 172-173), it is practically impossible to make religiously intolerant people recognise and understand that what they are doing might be morally and ethically wrong. They simply will not listen to reason (Law, 2011, p. 207). Grayling (2007, pp. 110-111) point out that people who behave religiously intolerant may even go as far as to murder those whom they see as infidels and apostates. They almost always regard themselves as very good people and they see what they do as absolute obedience to the will of their deity. The recent spate of videos released on YouTube by ISIS (revolutionaries from the so-called "Islamic State of Irak and Syria") that show – in graphic detail – the beheading of foreign journalists, so-called 'spies' and members of other faith communities, such as Christians, serves as an excellent case in point.

All this begs the question whether schools should not – as a matter of the greatest urgency – consider offering all their students[1] opportunities to learn specifically about religious respect and hospitality, as part of their official curricula and to do so in multilogically[2] safe, pedagogic sanctuaries[3]. If we can answer this question in the affirmative, then communities should be able to trust their schools to become and to be pedagogic sanctuaries where teachers and students alike may, above all, practice the *Homo Nolens* art of sense-making and meaning-sharing.

After outlining the problem and clarifying the concept of religious respect and hospitality, I share my own understanding of the construct *pedagogy* and then introduce the theoretical background of conversational analysis as my preferred methodology. This is followed by a few brief comments about the notion of "safe schools", after which I proceed to argue my thesis, namely that schools should be re-conceptualised as pedagogically justifiable and educationally assured sanctuaries of and for teaching-learning related, multilogical participation (i.e. teacher–learner(s) and learner–learner interaction) with specific reference to religious respect and hospitality.

The problem and the concept that is part of it

Given the above-mentioned background, it should be noted that a fair amount of conceptual muddle, under-theorisation and a lack of conceptual mapping still typifies much of the literature on pedagogic safe spaces and classroom-based multilogic-educative participation around religious tolerance as essential life skill. The following three questions that should, for example, be asked of the current state of professional knowledge regarding religious tolerance-related pedagogy still remain largely unaddressed:

- Do we have a coherent theory of religious tolerance instruction, or is the field still divided by ideological barriers, with no way of adjudicating the claims of competing theoretical and conceptual assertions?
- Do we have well-defined religious tolerance pedagogies, derived from and feeding into the theory, that are effective in suburban and rural schools across the globe?
- Are life orientation teachers able to operationalise this professional knowledge to teach religious tolerance effectively?

The Habermas-Derrida debate on the concepts of "tolerance" and "hospitality" is well captured in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Derrida, 2003). Although

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[1] In my country, South Africa, children of school-going age are often referred to as "learners". To make my paper more accessible to colleagues from other countries, I refer to learners of school-going age as "students".

[2] The concept "multilogue" was first coined by Peter Newman, in 1999. (cf. http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/8339/volumes/v26/NA-26 for a copy of his article.)

[3] I deliberately avoid referring to schools as "safe spaces". I regard this concept to be conceptually lacking. Instead, I re-conceptualise schools and individual teachers' classes in terms of pedagogic sanctuaries – spaces that should be intentionally designed and maintained to provide multilogical refuge to students; spaces where they can experience authentic and pedagogically justifiable conversational safety from pursuit, persecution, disrespect, ridicule or any other danger or form of personal embarrassment or indignity.

Habermas defended the notion of "tolerance" on legal and ethical grounds (Keet, 2010, p. 7), I am of the opinion that at least part of the under-theorisation referred to above, can be attributed to the fact that the concept "religious tolerance", to quote Derrida (2003, p. 16), still manages to display "... a Christian matrix ... [meaning that] if I tolerate I accept the other as a subordinate, not as an equal [...] indeed tolerance is first of all a charity [...] a paternalistic gesture". It seems that the notion of tolerance mostly designates an acceptance of something less than myself. Keet (2010, p. 7) therefore argues that the concept of religious tolerance cannot be salvaged theoretically or conceptually and that it needs to be abandoned legally and ethically. Derrida argues that it should be substituted with the concept of hospitality, because "pure and unconditional hospitality is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited" (2003, p. 17). Hospitality, *per se*, is furthermore immersed in the semantic values of unprejudiced respect, dignified communality and truthful, authentic engagement (cf. Keet, 2010, pp. 7, 8).

It is for these reasons that I propose using the concept of religious respect and hospitality in this paper instead of reverting back to the more established concept of "religious tolerance". If the three fundamental questions mentioned above were to be rephrased in terms of the concept of religious respect and hospitality, I am sure that the methodological framework of conversational analysis could catalyse our research efforts in this regard.

Conversational analysis as methodological framework

Described as the "science of teaching", *pedagogy* essentially refers to the art, practice or profession of teaching. It relates to how teachers should teach (theory) and to the various ways they can use to control and guide their students (practice) (Hotam & Hadar, 2013, p. 388). For purposes of this paper, I propose expanding the concept's semantic range to provide also for a performative and, especially, a participatory (i.e. a communal, engaged and conversational) understanding of the concept based on what I think should be happening in schools as pedagogic sanctuaries with regard to the teaching and learning of religious respect and hospitality. I therefore align myself methodologically with Mori and Markee's (2009, p. 1) framework of conversational analysis.

Conversational analysis has convincingly demonstrated that the social organization of classroom-based conversational engagement-in-interaction shapes and contributes to teaching and learning processes. Schwab's work (2011, p. 4) confirms this claim. He shows that learning can best be understood as a process that always takes place within a certain social context. His work also validates the claim made by conversational analysts that participation is ontically essential to learning (ibid.). Since religious respect and hospitality presupposes, almost by default, a particular social intelligence, it is logical to assume that the teaching of and learning about religious respect and hospitality should also be regarded as a fundamentally social enterprise, jointly constructed and intrinsically linked to students' repeated and regular conversational participation in such classroom activities (Schwab, 2011, p. 4). The teaching of and learning about religious respect and hospitality can, in any case, never be deprived of particular social contexts. It can, furthermore, never be regarded as an individual process or enterprise. Instead, it essentially remains a participatory, social endeavour (Mori & Hasegawa, 2009). Participation and learning

about religious respect and hospitality are therefore not representative of two separate pedagogic epistemologies. Instead, they should rather be (re-) conceptualised as being more or less synonymic: as one participates, conversationally, in a supportive educative environment, one learns and as one learns, one participates through, *inter alia*, conversation. After all, the participation structure of face-to-face, pedagogically justifiable interaction about religious respect and hospitality is not only extremely complicated; it is also co-determined by the different roles of a number and variety of speakers and listeners in a planned pedagogic environment and the alignment of their verbal and non-verbal actions with regard to, in our case, religious respect and hospitality.

So, in light of the work of, especially, Schwab (2011), I would like to venture that the quality of the learning that students will do about religious respect and hospitality will, amongst others, depend on their repeated conversational participation in classroom-based, pedagogically justifiable religious respect and hospitality-related activities with other more competent participants, as they progress through the school from grade to grade and provided that their school is constitutive of a safe, pedagogical sanctuary.

Schools as pedagogical sanctuaries: broadening dialogue to embracing multilogue

School-based education is not just aimed at the teaching and learning of academic subject matter. Education in or at school also has the broader purpose of forming, character formation and inculcation of the upcoming generations into the mores, habits, customs and practices of the social structures of which they are fledgling members (Wolhuter, Van der Walt & Potgieter, 2015, p. 356). For this reason it can be argued that the school as societal relationship or social institution should be, or should constitute a pedagogical sanctuary for both these forms of education to come to fruition (ibid.). Not only should teachers as educators in the broader sense of the word be able and willing to create pedagogical sanctuaries for their students – in their own classes – to learn and master learning content about religious respect and hospitality in accordance with certain criteria or outcomes, but they should also provide pedagogical sanctuaries for the students as educands to become – in due course – mature and responsible young people who can enter the world competently and confidently.

For this to happen, classroom-based dialogue should be widened to make provision for multilogic-educative participation. Schwab (2011, p. 5) does exactly that. He suggests that the concept of classroom-based participation encompasses all actions that continuously demonstrate forms of educative involvement performed by teachers and learners within evolving structures of pedagogically justifiable conversation. It is against this methodological and conceptual backdrop, then, that I wish to rethink the notion of classroom-based dialogue about religious respect and hospitality.

In education, dialogue is usually considered a two-way communication – at best an oral dialogue between a teacher and one of her learners at any specific time; a working method that the teacher employs to create interaction within contextualised, dialogic-educative spaces (cf. Leganger-Krogstad, 2014, p. 124). However, as far as the civically sensitive issue of religious respect and hospitality education is

concerned, it seems that this particular understanding of dialogue might be conceptually somewhat restrictive and pedagogically contentious. Expanding on the work done by Leganger-Krogstad (2014, pp. 104-128), I therefore propose the concept of pedagogic "multilogueing". In its simplest form, the concept "multilogue" refers – logically so – to pedagogically intended, face-to-face interaction including more than two participants, e.g. a teacher and one of her learners at a time. For this reason, I suggest that authentic teaching-learning environments should, instead, provide for and enable the establishment and maintenance of pedagogic sanctuaries for multilogic engagement and interaction around the issue of religious respect and hospitality.

Such spaces can, perhaps, best be explained with reference to Rule's definition (2004, p. 1) of dialogic space as a cognitive and socio-conventional space where role-players can mediate within a non-threatening environment[4]. Creating pedagogic sanctuaries for open, yet focused and substantiated multilogueing, built on mutual trust, support, respect, honesty, critical thinking and open, clear communication about issues of religious respect and hospitality, will provide both teachers and learners with a practice ground for classroom-based discussions without fear of pursuit, persecution, disrespect or ridicule.

Religious respect and hospitality-related multilogueing intentionally seeks to extend the conventional notion of classroom-based dialogue between teacher and learners by introducing additional "voices" (besides that of the teacher and her learners) for the duration of any teaching-learning opportunity. Besides the teacher and her learners, these voices might, therefore, also take the form of a variety of pedagogic tools and strategies of and for mediation between the teacher and her learners. They might, for example, include (depending on the class itself, as well as on the nature and scope of the relevant curriculum topic and concomitant subject matter) material artefacts, theoretical cognifacts, political, traditional, lifestyle and communal cultifacts, values-driven teleofacts, or even practical tasks. However, the teacher remains responsible – at all times – for the interaction in her classroom. S/he designs and creates a pedagogical sanctuary, and chooses what educational material to pay attention to (Leganger-Krogstad, 2014, p. 104); s/he is the one who sets up the rules for the multilogues in her classroom in order to facilitate pedagogically fruitful interactions around issues of religious respect and hospitality.

Conclusion

The teaching of and learning about religious respect and hospitality is not only a moral, but also an educative obligation. Within a pedagogically safe, multilogic santuary, it is the teacher's pedagogic duty to use her classroom language skills to stay ahead of her learners and to *scaffold* her learners to be able to enhance the next step in their learning process. The pedagogic tools and strategies provided for in pedagogic sanctuaries are expected to help mediate the teaching and learning process and to help all role-players to interpret and construct appropriate sets of mutually beneficial understanding with respect to religious respect and hospitality. This requires her to choose the tools and strategies that she will be using on the basis of didactical considerations to enhance the religious respect and hospitality-related

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[4] Cf. footnote 3 above.

multilogue and to aid knowledge creation, sense-making and meaning-sharing (cf. Leganger-Krogstad, 2014, pp. 106, 123). The tools and strategies should, therefore, be designed, selected and operationalised in such a way as to provide enough learning scaffolding – through information – to become authentic – yet additional – voices in a particular pedagogic-multilogical, educative setting (Leganger-Krogstad, 2014, p. 113).

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