Innovative Approaches Towards Methodologies of Learning / Teaching Social Responsibility

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Abstract. The authors of the article deals with the problem of education for social responsibility from teacher training and didactical perspectives. The authors stress that every society has a need to perpetuate itself, and establishes supports and promotes institutions which do so. And the role of educational communities is discussed because schools need to provide learning / teaching settings for students awareness of their responsibilities to the society. That knowledge, those skills and dispositions in a globalized context are different from traditional ones and they have to be researched.

Keywords: learning, teaching, students, social responsibility, citizenship education.

Introduction

In teaching about the society and its institutions, values, norms and sanctions schools can be a considerable force for maintenance of the status quo. However democratic societies need to be dynamic, open to consideration of alternative perspectives and possibilities that reflect changes within and outside of the society (Nelson, 2010). In an age of rapid change such as that now occurring, the challenges facing the status quo are significant. Globalization and the growth of technology are two forces for change. Environmental
challenges do not stop at national boundaries and often demand new ways of looking at how institutions function. These and other challenges cannot be resolved by any one nation. Technology continues to change how people communicate, learn about events, and gain knowledge. The flow of information is immediate following an event, and the reliability and legitimacy of facts found on the web need to be carefully examined. Schools need to help prepare the young with the knowledge, the skills and the dispositions to address these and other areas. Schools need to provide students with an awareness of their responsibilities to the society, from local to global considerations. That knowledge, those skills and dispositions in a globalized context are different from traditional ones, and can often be a source of tension and conflict. With what knowledge must our schools provide the young? Traditionally that knowledge included information about the nature of the society and the world within which it functioned. Future citizens have a responsibility to know how the political system functions, and the nature of the system of government as well as the values on which it has been developed. Economics, geography and the other social sciences still all need to be addressed. Literacy and numeracy skills remain essential for participation in the society. However, the nature of each of those fields in the current and future global context needs to be re-considered. New political, economic and cultural power centers have emerged and continue to emerge (Naidoo, 2005). The knowledge schools address must be authentic, it must reflect current realities. The problem dealt in this article can be identified as the question – what kind of innovative learning and teaching methodologies can be identified as a most relevant to education of social responsibility in globalized world? The major aim of the article is to discuss the innovative ways of learning and teaching social responsibility. Objectives of the article:

1. To analyse education for social responsibility from the teacher training and didactical perspectives.
2. To disclose the most powerful innovative didactical approaches towards education for social responsibility. Methods used – descriptive analyses and content analyses.

Teacher education perspective

Many organizations have proposed ways in which schools can establish environment for helping students to develop sense of social responsibility and the ways on which they can take active social actions. Of particular interest is the role of teacher education training. The Longview Foundation report on teacher preparation (2008) provides a listing of some of the recommendations from many national groups in the United States advocating for the infusion of global learning in the process. NAFSA Association of International Educators (2012) has identified learning outcomes for global competence. Stating that global learning is more than knowing about other countries and having knowledge about a range of topics, it posits that global learning includes learning about one’s own
cultural identity, understanding the nature of global interdependence, understanding world conditions and the process and challenges of change, while developing skills for constructive participation in that change. The Council of Chief State School Supervisors and the Asia Society (2010) identify four specific needed competencies. These include investigating the world, recognizing perspectives, communicating ideas, and taking action. Thus, the work done must be authentic: related to real ideas and issues, open ended with no pre-set conclusions, purposeful in that what we teach is what students will need to use, and analyzed with a consideration of how knowledge is generated with multiple perspectives examined and alternative approaches understood (Nelson et al., 2004). Such proposals are a significant change in the expectations from schools and for the preparation of teachers to initiate them.

How can institutions prepare teachers to meet these expectations? Longview (2008) provides a summary of excellent practices, and recommendations from recruitment of pre-service teachers, faculty development, internationalizing education and methods courses, and exchange programs to electronic collaborations. Worth additional consideration are approaches in the teacher preparation program which both provide learning experiences for the future educator while modeling strategies which they can consider for their own planning, teaching and assessing within the context of globalization. What innovative strategies can help teachers and students meet their social responsibilities? A focus of many recommendations for teaching and learning in a globalized arena is the recognition that knowledge is not enough. A range of skills are needed in order to meet the expectations previously cited. These skills include communication skills (clear and persuasive speaking and writing), and active listening skills. As learners begin to explore multiple perspectives and examine alternative approaches there will be differences in viewpoints. To minimize the potentially negative consequences of such controversies becoming areas of dispute, argument and conflict there is a need for learning and practicing conflict resolution skills. All of these skills need to be examined, practiced and improved. Found in cooperative learning research are additional practices on which to design teaching and learning experiences which strengthen skills. Using a structured academic controversy to explore the dimensions of a topic on which there is disagreement provides a framework designed to increase listening and understanding while providing an arena for careful communication of perspectives. Areas of agreement may emerge, but the process protects the views of participants (Johnson, & Johnson, 1998, 2008). Additional cooperative learning research provides a wealth of possibilities for designing instruction involving cooperative and collaborative work from paired assignments to small and large group activities. Within this area there has also been a contention that the work around which the skills are built needs to include an examination of primary sources and recognizing credible sources of information (Slavin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1999, 2002, 2009; Rubin, Hayes, 2010; Jang et al., 2010). These approaches need to be embedded within teacher training programs. Modeled there, the strategies can be
practiced and appreciated becoming part of the strategies teacher education candidates will use in their own classrooms.

Teachers also need to consider ways in which to embrace technology. Seamlessly infusing appropriate technologies into teaching and learning can facilitate meeting the needs of globalization. A text and written material is dated from the time it is printed. Careful use of the internet can provide access to current information, and to a potentially unlimited source of information. Students can see broadcasts and videos and read accounts of information as an event is unfolding. The skills for using electronic resources need to be taught and practiced. Such resources also make possible collaboration of learners between classes, schools and countries. The projects may be local, between a few area schools or classes. They may have a specific topic. In one institution every year teacher education candidates serve as virtual mentors, electronically working with area middle and high school students on an international civic education curriculum. Teacher education candidates from all disciplines explore social responsibilities for civic education that teachers throughout the school share. They learn a model for guiding student research to authentic areas of need, and to using interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to design remedies (Daly, 2012). Primary source materials have been recommended and used for many years in teacher training and in practice. Providing such sources from multiple perspectives can meet the expectations of a globalizing society. In this process the conflict resolution and cooperative learning skills can be effective. Discussion based questions employing primary sources from a range of views can engage learners. Also worth considering is the use of images. Carefully deconstructing an image provides knowledge as learners identify what is shown in the image. The learner is asked what they see. If it is there, they are correct in building a foundation of facts revealed in the image. The image can also be read for clues and information not seen – such as hints as to when the image was created, the time period, the time of year, weather conditions and so on. Collaborative work in pairs or small groups can be built on this, and as the image is explored there is an opportunity to focus on empathy and emotional intelligence and to address dispositions not as easily done with text (Martorella, 1995; Elias, 2006). Examining faces and the positions of persons in images can lead to an interpretation of, and possibly an appreciation for, the emotions experienced by those in the image. To read text about poverty may not be as powerful or have the emotional impact as one or a series of images depicting persons living in conditions of poverty. As students explore images together – from specific locations and events to those of a global nature – this collaborative work can build knowledge, skills and empathy. Creative and critical thinking skills can be addressed with writing about the images, possibly considering the time before the image was created, or what followed after it was completed. Images provide a gateway into authentic, real events, global in nature, with which students can work. Differing multiple perspectives can be the foundation for discussion and reflection.

Additionally many organizations provide a framework for pairing teachers and students in schools around the world. Pre-service teacher education candidates need to be
familiar with such sites and organizations. They need experiences in which they work with teacher candidates in other locations and countries to explore perspectives on teaching and learning. Common projects and assignments can help to build knowledge as well as appreciation for differing approaches to teaching. Such contacts have the potential to grown into long term relationships between institutional faculty and students, and to serve as a foundation for travel opportunities. In mastering these many technologies and using them students and teachers, both in training programs and in practice, continue to refine skills and open the possibility for collaboration and cooperation. Providing teacher education candidates with experiences in innovative methodologies gives them the experience and skill to use them in their future lessons. In addition to the support for such strategies in cooperative learning and cognitive learning research, these interactive approaches also are congruent with much of the emerging brain based learning research. The brain is reported to be ever changing, and shaped by activity, culture and context. Knowledge is built by doing things. Much of this research suggest that emotions play an important role in learning (Hinton et al., 2008; Fischer, 2009).

P. K. Murhy, & S. L. Benton (2010), S. Woolfolk (2012) contends that essential to learning is that tasks are authentic, that real problems are the base for learning, which is organized, challenging but reasonable. All of the methodologies described meet these criteria. Such a foundation is important for the learning needed in a globalized world, and for effectively working with others (both in classrooms and in post-school experiences). In the pre-service teacher education program modeling innovative methodologies can benefit through the use of a double de-briefing. In this situation the participants review the knowledge and skills addressed in the lesson, and then the ways in which the specific strategy was selected to engage the learner.

Students and the schools in which they learn (physical and virtual) meet their responsibilities by learning about real issues and challenges from multiple perspectives. Innovative methodologies can effectively address what is known about teaching and learning and harness the power of technology to engage learners. Teacher education programs and candidates meet their responsibilities by exploring and learning how to implement strategies that bring learners together to examine and consider possibilities for resolving challenges of a global nature.

**Didactical perspective**

Most of the researchers of educational environment in which social responsibility can be developed effectively stress four types of approaches: the *deliberative* (Hes, 2009), the *networking* (Miliušienė, 2012), *social innovation didactics* (Jegou et al., 2009) and *active citizenship approaches*. They seems much relevant for solving raised problem: what kind of innovative learning and / or teaching methodologies can be identified as a most relevant
to education of social responsibility in globalized world? To answer to this question we will describe in general way the approaches mentioned above.

Deliberative approach. It is commonly understandable (Hes, 2008, 2009; Paula, Maitles, 2012) that the best way for students to learn social issues is looking for alternatives and discuss them on the bases of arguments. In another words deliberation is a powerful discussion. From the teaching / learning perspective is much suggested to state a problem as a controversy. American researcher Diana Hess (2009) explore the nature of controversy, and ways in which it is addressed (or not). She provides a focus on building a climate for discussion and exploration of views and gives some clarification of definition of controversial issues

“They are authentic questions about kinds of public policies that should be adopted and address public problems... What should be done to lower the high school drop-out rates? Should my community build a new school?” (Hes, 2009, p. 5).

Actually these issues involve different policies, they are very much authentic to students and generate multiply and competing answers. Authors stresses that they are controversial and likely to be included into school curricula. Because they motivate students not to think only about themselves but to be aware and take some cognitive and maybe practical responsibility about others. This point is much important to the development of sense of social responsibility.

Networking approach. Most of the social researches analysing global society (Castels, 2001; Bauman, 2007) poits out that every world citizen has to learn not only to participate but to build up social networks by themselves. Educational community is facing the same challenges of networking society. Thus most of the researchers (Miliušienė, 2012; Kvieskienė, Kvieska, 2012) suggests to develop educational strategies and use them not only as a social environment but as well as pedagogical, didactical approaches. Monika Miliušienė (2012) in her dissertation concludes, that:

“Inclusive education strengthens cohesive school community where social networks and relationships among people are strong and close. Inclusive education develops altruism, friendship and sympathy because living in a cohesive society is grounded on mutual relations and support... active participation in school life could be identified as one of the successful educational strategies... at school... participate in school learning process through intervening in student’s learning activities, both during regular school hours and after school” (Miliušienė, 2012, p. 182).

The recent research on interconnectedness of social partnerships and inovations did show how “social partnerships and innovations can produce unexpected results. It can also inspire creativity, promote positive personal and social ecological engagement...
In another words, partnership and social innovations can bring positive changes in personal development towards social responsibility.

Social innovation didactics approach was developed by Sustainable Everyday project (Manzini, Jegou, 2008) and adopted as a didactical toolkit (Jegou et al., 2009) for schools by the international PERL project (Partnership for Education and Research About Responsible Living). Lithuania is one of the European countries in which the toolkit is translated and used in educational process (Zaleskienė, 2009). In the recent development LOLA is described as a toolkit which promotes active teaching / learning towards social responsibility. The didactical process requires students engagement in a series of steps to locate, critique and raise awareness of good local case studies about sustainable living and stewardship of the social environment. It’s is:

“a pedagogical tool for students and teachers which assist them in the process of identifying, evaluating and documenting cases of social innovation towards sustainable lifestyles” The LOLA allows teachers and their class to discover, approach and give visibility to alternative sustainable lifestyle in their surroundings. It provides an opportunity to progress beyond the common pedagogical use of case studies and project work which tend to limited to the immediate classroom context” (Jegou et al., 2009, p. 4).

Active citizenship approach. Citizenship education and civic engagement are most proactive fields for researchers in European countries as well as around the world. The research data from IEA (International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievements) studies did show the gap between national policies, educational practices and students civic activities (Torney-Purta, Schwille, 1999; Amadeo et al., 2002; Aisley et al., 2013). The conclusions could be drawn up that suggested teaching / learning methodologies don’t reflect students expectations, interests and needs. Thus motivation for active citizenship is going down. Even social and civic environment and / or culture is not supporting development such values as initiative, solidarity and social responsibility.

The results of national research on students “civic power” and citizenship education (Ziliukaitė et al., 2012) suggests that students “civic power” is higher than “civic power” of Lithuanian people. It indicates that Lithuanian students are likely to be more active in communities, compains, ect. Thus educational policy and practices are challenged to look for new alternative ways of education students civic activity and social responsibility. Political attempt was made in 2008 while national core-curriculum for citizenship education was revised and improved. The new core-curriculum (Pilietiškumo ugdymo bendroji programa, 2008) is based on three main ideas: awareness and research in society; participation and initiation of changes in community; development and maintenance of social relations. It is expected that students will develop their sense of community and participatory. And recent school practices including learning / teaching methodologies are started to be based on innovative methods.
Concluding remarks

Researchers contends that essential for teacher training programs is that all the tasks has to be authentic, that real problems are the base for learning, which are organized, challenging but reasonable. All of the methodologies described has to meet these criteria’s. Such a foundation is important for the learning needed in a globalized world, and for effectively working with others (both in classrooms and in post-school experiences). In the pre-service teacher education program modeling innovative methodologies can benefit through the use of a double de-briefing. In this situation the participants review the knowledge and skills addressed in the lesson, and then the ways in which the specific strategy was selected to engage the learner.

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Discussing the innovative approaches for learning / training methodologies authors of the article agree with the researchers that most effective approaches for learning / teaching social responsibility are as follows: deliberative, networking, social innovation didactics and active citizenship approaches.

References


Inovatyvus požiūris į socialinės atsakomybės ugdymo(si) prielaidas

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Santrauka


Esminiai žodžiai: ugdymas, ugdymasis, mokiniai, socialinė atsakomybė, pilietiškumo ugdymas.

Įteikta / Received 2014-04-20
Priimta / Accepted 2014-05-20