

INTERVIEW WITH DR JAGDISH GUNDARA (INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)



ENTREVISTA CON EL DR. JAGDISH GUNDARA (INSTITUTO DE EDUCACIÓN, UNIVERSIDAD DE LONDRES)

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Dr Jagdish Gundara is an Emeritus Professor of the Institute of Education at the University of London and Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in International Studies and Teacher Education since 2000. Professor Gundara was appointed the Director of the re-established International Centre for Intercultural Studies at the Institute of Education University of London in July 2012. Professor Gundara is the founding member and the current President of the International Association of Intercultural Education (IAIE). His research interests are related to the field of human rights and education in multicultural societies. He is the author of “Interculturalism, Education and Inclusion” (Paul Chapman, 2000) and co-editor of “Intercultural Social Policy in Europe” (Ashgate, 2000).

Professor Gundara received us at his office at the Institute of Education last September to talk about intercultural education in the 21st century.

El Dr. Jagdish Gundara es Profesor Emérito del Instituto de Educación de la Universidad de Londres y preside la Cátedra UNESCO de Estudios Interculturales y Educación del Profesorado desde el año 2000. El Catedrático Gundara es miembro fundador y actual presidente de la Asociación Internacional de Educación Intercultural (AIEI). Su investigación está vinculada con el campo de los derechos humanos y la educación en sociedades multiculturales. Es autor del libro “Interculturalidad, Educación e Inclusión” (Paul Chapman, 2000) y co-editor del volumen “Política social intercultural en Europa” (Ashgate, 2000).

El profesor Gundara nos recibió en su despacho del Instituto de Londres el pasado septiembre para hablar sobre la educación Intercultural en el siglo XXI.

Beatriz Cortina (BC): You are the Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Intercultural Studies and Teacher Education, what is its aim?

Jagdish Gundara (JG): The UNESCO chair is in the field of Intercultural Studies and the term tends to include areas of Education, but also, other areas of concern within Social Sciences, Humanities, and also Sciences so we cover interculturality from an inclusive perspective. *In terms of the diverse of knowledge and disciplines, it is important that the different aspects of knowledge are taken on board in social diverse societies.*

One of the aspects is, then, of course, the pedagogies relevant for Intercultural Studies; as well as theoretical and conceptual issues relating to Intercultural Education and, of course, policy and practice. So in one sense, it focuses on diversity within educational systems and society.

BC: From your point of view, is there any difference between interculturalism and multiculturalism?

JG: Well, this is one of the major problems and divides this field; partly because interculturalism and multiculturalism are seen differently by English-speaking countries and non-English-speaking countries. In English-speaking countries, such as US, UK, the English Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the term “multicultural” is used as a policy term and actions. But it is also been open

to criticism by the conservative elements in those societies who tend to suggest that multiculturalism is divisive and therefore, it is not inclusive of cultures, but dividing groups in society. This however, is not true because those who work in the field of multiculturalism are not divisive.

In any case another way of working in the field is to use *intercultural perspectives in developing policy and practice and multiculturalism as a way of defining* a school, a community, an institution and a society, so that you can have a multicultural school because there might be taxonomic features of multiculturalism within that school, or community or society. These include linguistic diversity, religious diversity or even more so secular views and social class diversity. Issues pertaining to the relations between settled groups as opposed to the mobile or non-settled groups, such as the travellers have a long pedigree. So the taxonomic features of religion, language, class and so forth are other kinds of examples of the term multiculturalism used descriptively.

At this moment in time it is important for all those who work in fields of inculturalism and multiculturalism to establish some common ground and work together to deal with the deep seated social divides in most of our societies. Neo-liberal economics and the shrinking of the state is leading to the rise of Neo-Nazi movements in disadvantaged and deeply divided communities and professional collaboration between interculturalism and multiculturalism is essential.

BC: Some European educational policies and advances in societies aim at promoting Intercultural Education,

do you really think Intercultural Education is possible in today's society, in today's schools across Europe?

JG: Well, maybe, the questions should be looked at the other way. You could say that if there is no intercultural education, what kind of education will we have? In other words, *there is no European society that is not multicultural*. If you reflect on your own country, Spain, it is not the immigrants that make the Spanish society multicultural, it is the indigenous differences, diversities within Spanish society that make Spain a historically multicultural country. So, for instance, from the taxonomic features that I mentioned earlier, there is linguistic diversity, the differences of Catalan, Basque and Galician linguistic communities and of course, the Spanish language is the national language. Hence, Spain is a thoroughly multilingual society and nation. There are also religious groups of various kinds, the Jewish presence, converted groups, Christianity, Islamic groups historically in the southern regions of Spain, with architectural presence in cities like Granada. Very large numbers of Spanish people are secular and a very important part of Spanish culture and political life. ... These examples provide some historically based evidence of multiculturalism of Spanish society, as there are also in the British modern society. There are also social class differences, and social classes have differential access to Education. Furthermore, there are different ways of life between the settled and non-settled people, who have historically been part of the Spanish society, and the British society too. The Roma traveller

population has been in Europe for a long time (since the 16th century). The national state systems are largely governed by dominant cultures, and dominant groups and they, tend to assert uniformity based on majoritarianism. There may also be the presence of issues of xenophobia and racism based on exclusivist ideologies.

The point for saying all this is that if we don't have intercultural education, what kind of Education would you have to bring all those groups together? If we don't have intercultural education we are likely to have intercultural conflicts. So the role of intercultural education is to bring about intercultural understandings, intercultural coherence and cohesion by bringing diverse groups together in societies; and *it is only by implementing intercultural education in a substantive way that we would be able to remove the barriers of xenophobia, racism or inequalities* of various of kinds and to ensure that we have peaceable and inclusive communities.

Therefore, the actualisation of an intercultural education is a paradigm for all European states.

Now, of course historical diversities, within European societies (including Spain and Britain), is also supplemented by the presence of the immigrant populations. This adds another dimension of multiculturalism which includes different languages, religions, social differences. They may also confront xenophobia and racism like the other minorities with historical presence in European societies.

Thus, all these features of historical and contemporary diverse communities *require a soundly based intercultural and inclusive education, which applies to everyone, not just to immigrants*

and minorities, but to dominant groups as well, to ensure that those societies function optimally.

BC: I do agree with you. Multiculturalism is a reality in our society and Education cannot turn its face to a different place. So is it just a question of inclusive education?

JG: Well, I mean, we do have different education systems across European countries and there are different kinds of schools, you know, there are private schools, public schools, and there are increasingly free schools and so forth, but of course, those kinds of institutions which are separated on different basis tend not to contribute to establishing inclusivity. They in fact, reflect exclusions on various indices and to have inclusive education the education systems need to eliminate features of exclusion, inequality. Inclusion cannot be brought about without taking measures to reduce inequalities, build bridges between diverse value systems and establish a commonly accepted democratic ethos. Values and norms of dominant groups which govern our state systems cannot lead to inclusion.

A comprehensive public Education is the most important way in which we can have a good Intercultural and inclusive Education, with young people from all communities go to the same school and learn to live with each other, learn with each other, and also to resolve conflict to each other, because obviously in social diverse societies, multicultural societies, there are differences; and those differences do include basis of conflicts within groups; and some of them are

of educational nature and schools and teachers can resolve some of them, not all of them, but some of them. As I said earlier, intercultural studies should include areas of social and public policy, so other areas such as welfare, housing, employment and citizenship, all of them contribute to that resolution of conflicts within other institutions of the state.

Teachers and schools also have a role, an important role to play in actualising intercultural peaceful communities and strengthening intercultural understanding which can form the basis for inclusive education.

BC: You just said that schools have their role in actualising intercultural peaceful communities, but not all the role. There are other agents that need to address multiculturalism.

What's the role of the faculties of Education in this multicultural issue? What about teacher training programmes? Are they updated to guarantee intercultural education?

JG: Yes, I mean, we could argue that universities and teacher education have to play a fundamental role in a multicultural society, and that in complex and diverse schools teachers cannot deal with all the issues that they are presented with. What do I mean by that? Teachers are not the problem because the problem lies in the way in which *they are not properly trained and educated*. You talked about teacher training, I would like to call it "Teacher Education" so that teachers are educated and have the conceptual or theoretical knowledge, as well as trained in pedagogical skills. So, institutions

of Teacher Education, higher education and universities, ought to provide the knowledge, skills and understandings of what a multicultural society is. And as I said earlier, the title of the UNESCO Chair is "Intercultural Studies", which include different domains of knowledge and different disciplines, so there is no domain or discipline of knowledge to which teacher education cannot contribute to.

So we should not have teacher training within major institutions, where in little corner somewhere, there is intercultural education of teachers; that to me is a paradox, that doesn't have any place in modern schools. All the teachers have to have an understanding of multiculturalism of societies and within the broad domains of knowledge and disciplines of what they teach; *teachers ought to be educated to teach their subjects in an intercultural manner*. So for instance, one of the major problems in our world today is centrism of people's cultures because they think of themselves as Asian-centric, African-centric, Indo-centric, Islamic-centric, Euro-centric, but the problem with those centrism is that we cannot live in multicultural societies with the centred-basis of values and knowledge; we need to have a more non-centric understanding of human history, of the bases of knowledge and universal human values.

If we examine the European Renaissance it is presented to be a Christian phenomenon, and in fact the realities are very different. It was not only the Catholic Church, which took part of the Renaissance. It was also the way in which the progressive French Church and scholars as well as the Arab and Jewish

scholars in the Middle Ages translated written texts into Arabic and then those texts were translated into Latin, and hence, established the kind of global understanding that is required to diminish centrism of knowledge.

Now in the 21st century we have lost all those intercultural understandings of the Renaissance.

What I have tried to suggest here is that teacher education, has a major role in the context of Higher Education institutions, which should broaden the knowledge of teachers, of people working in schools, to include the kind of basis of inclusive values and knowledge which is relevant for the 21st century and to prepare young people to live in an unequal and complex or modern world.

When we talk about globalisation, it is largely an economic phenomenon and is therefore, only superficial globalisation. As I said, there is a need for greater levels of equality at a global level. For instance, one of the major problems is the inequality between men and women, and in certain societies, you know, women have much less access to good education, as well as housing, health or employment, and this is largely a result of discrimination. Women in the 21st century have acquired rights as a result of long and hard struggles historically and the rights they have won are hard won rights. It therefore follows that girls and women ought to have equality in all public institutions to ensure that they are respected and that they have the parity of access to education and all other social goods.

However it is true that in private lives people may live differently. But in public terms, there are public rights which all people have, especially women and girls,

and this is certainly true in the field of Educational Rights. And the actualisation of women's rights is an issue for all of us in the 21st century as well as to ensure equality in general terms for all citizens and residents in our societies.

BC: In one of your articles you argue in favour of teaching universal values as a way of making citizens and society multicultural, and I quote, "Religious toleration is a universal value". However, there are certain religions that may contradict universal values, such as gender equity, as you pinpointed before. So my question is what should be the role of religion in Education? How can religious values and universal values be handled at schools?

JG: Well as I said earlier, there are various kinds of educational institutions in our society. You have, for example, public schools, which are secular.

Basically we thought that the religions mostly speak to those who are part of their faith so the message would reach those who belong to a particular faith. Therefore, you can have religious instruction in a mosque, in a church and so on so forth.

However, education is a different kind of phenomena because it is something that takes place in public institutions, in a universal and secular society, and in that context *there are public rights, as I said earlier, which are not drawn only from religions, but also from the way people have fought long hard battles against socio-economic inequality and racism.*

For instance, the Holocaust is a major example of suppression of human rights in Europe; but after the 2nd World War,

the United Nations has promoted changes for human rights to become a major task of all modern societies, and all modern states, have modern constitutions, and these modern constitution's guarantee rights of people, whether they are girls, or poor people, or men and women, or minorities of various kinds, and so on and so forth. Here what we find is that religion is one aspect of social diversity, and their rights are also guaranteed in modern constitutional states. We do not have rights of difference and diversity or gender equality preserved in religious-governed states, but in democratic secular societies where religion as one aspect of diversity. And those modern constitutions based on human and children's rights guarantee people the right to believe or not to believe, to go or not to go to church or a mosque. *These are constitutional rights, and are guaranteed by public democratic institutions.*

Here, I think, we need to change the nature of the discussion, of the paradigm or we contribute to talk about religion in an isolated way: as the only major part of a global construct. There are many other constituent aspects of global social constructs, of social systems, societal systems, which include certain other groups, who have very different types of human belief systems. These can include people who live and function cooperatively as well as people who choose not to belong and live alternative life styles and social systems.

BC: Multiculturalism and multilingualism are intrinsically related and enrich society. However, these can also bring problems of understanding into schools because students are not com-

petent in the language of instruction. What would you recommend to deal with these situations in class?

JG: Yes, obviously you are right. Multiculturalism within schools presents potential prospects, but also, some problems; and multilingualism in society is one of the issues that has both the potential of enhancing linguistic capital, as well as, bringing different bases of knowledge and understandings of humanity. But at the same time, for teachers and schools and classrooms, it does present an issue. And here, perhaps, if we look at the way in which the first language of young people can be taught to them, so that they feel secure learners, then this can be used as a basis for them to learn the second language or the dominant language. I would suggest that the use of first language ought to form the basis for learning the second language, and that this can be done inside the school, as well as, outside within the community.

There is a way in Multilingualism can be used as an asset rather than treated as a problem. One of the problems that we have in the field of multiculturalism is the way in which multilingualism and multiculturalism is viewed from a deficit perspective. People who speak, let us say, Spanish or English may look down on people who do not speak the dominant languages. Whereas what we need to do is to turn that question around and *look at linguistic diversity as a way of enriching societies*. It is also important that we can systematically ensure that teachers can deal with linguistic diversity by equipping them with skills and knowledge, so that they can deal with different languages in classroom, the school and also the playground.

BC: As and English teacher in Spain I have experienced how learning foreign languages can increase students tolerance towards multiculturalism. Do you agree with me?

JG: Yes, of course, you know, Europe is a rich multilingual continent. If you look at the number of languages that are spoken in the member states of the European Union and if you go to the Council of Europe you see the great number of languages that are officially spoken in the Council and the EU. Although a lot needs to be done to protect and enhance the usage of the lesser known languages which form part Europe's past and present linguistic landscape.

Europeans are perhaps one of the most multilingual populations in the world and in many European countries people speak more than one language. This is an enriching aspect of our continent and I think linguistic diversity is a positive dimension within our societies. *Languages can be used to build bridges between people*. But sometimes it is not an easy phenomenon, and one needs to take on board multilingualism in a systematic way to ensure that this is not seen as a problem or a deficit, but an assets. But teacher need to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to do this job well.

BC: Thanks to English, two people from different parts of the World are here talking about multiculturalism. English has definitely become a global language. On the one hand, promoting English in non-English speaking countries contribute to the building of bridges between cultures, as you just said; but, on the other hand, it is

surpassing other minority languages. What is your opinion of English as a global language? Are we giving too much importance to English?

JG: Well, I think as you said, at one level it is appropriate because we can understand each other but I don't know if it is good thing if English becomes a dominant and exclusive global language. We should ensure that other languages are not erased with the use of English around the world. So I think other languages have an important role to play. Multiculturalism and interculturalism are aspects of societies which should be perceived of in multilingual terms. Multilingualism and not only dominant languages should inform us about issues of diversity, inequalities and interculturality.

For instance, Spanish as a language is spoken not just in Spain, but also, in most Latin America, Mexico, However, in Latin America's linguistic diversity represented by their indigenous languages also needs safeguarding. So, Spanish is another language that is quite important in other parts of the world and should enrich our understandings of what multiculturalism and intercularlity mean. This discourse should not be dominated by English language only.

I think multilingualism is a feature of our global world and dominance of anyone language is, perhaps, not the best thing. There is a need to ensure that other languages are featured within communicative systems. That is why the European Union and the Council of Europe has promoted the use of other languages, rather than just English, through their linguistic policies.

BC: Just to finish, you are one of founding members of the International Association for Intercultural Education which was set up in the 80s. How has intercultural education and research evolved since then? And where do intercultural studies direct?

JG: Ummm [laugh] Well, I think it is a very complicated issue. As you said, the International Association for Intercultural Education was founded in this very building in London, at the Institute of Education in 1984. One can say the Association has partially succeeded in refining research in this field but also not been very successful in grappling with the 'big issues.' If you remember in Europe, after the Holocaust in the 2nd World War, racism was defeated. However, in southeast Europe, after the collapse of the Yugoslav states, it was revived. On the one hand, we still have major problems of exclusion, of racism and of xenophobia. For instance, in France many young people were killed recently due to the rise of racism, and in Norway we had the terrible killings by a Neo-Nazi. So within Europe, we do have racism, xenophobia and also, fascism. We have not been able to tackle the roots of these major issues. On the other hand, we have lots of people living, learning and teaching peacefully, and *what we need to ensure that social differences and diversities are systematically taken on board to guarantee intercultural understanding.* Our research in this field should be based on a critical understanding of issues and based on good sound evidence.

Educators and reseachers have a fundamental responsibility to re-visit the Enlightenment and to re-engage

with these important ideas: universalise them and also root them in our local complex and divided communities and educational institutions. In some senses, since the 1980s there have been some developments in a better understanding of different groups and different people, but at the same time it is not enough in the sense that the problems in our society has increased dramatically. So what we need to have is both qualitative and quantitative measures to deal with differences where they raise social divisiveness and problems. We need to ensure is that all areas of society, social and public policies, with education as one aspect of these can contribute to the development of intercultural understandings between different people. These measures then

ought to be institutionalised within the mainstream of our societies, so that they do not remain at the margins and fringes of public life.

Education has an important role to play and there are some developments in curriculum by developing and widening knowledge, understanding and skills. This is a very important task of teacher education, because they are multiplier institutions. Each teacher teaches hundreds of children. In fact, what we need is a more systematic basis of implementing intercultural education in our societies. As an African expression states: 'It takes a whole village to educate a child.' However, in our modern and globalising world the whole village may need to engage itself in teaching and learning.