

Curriculum transformation in a diverse society: Who decides curriculum, and how?

La transformación del currículo en una sociedad diversa: ¿quién y cómo se decide el currículo?

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to show how, in the United States, some states and school districts are transforming their curriculum through ethnic studies. Ethnic studies exists as a result of unequal power relations in which historically marginalized groups have not had the power to define how education will serve their own communities. According to its activists, ethnic studies not only teaches about the cultures of diverse groups, but also reconstructs, the curriculum around the counter-narratives perspectives, epistemologies, and visions of groups that have been treated historically as if their experiences and perspectives were of lesser value. The article begins with a theoretical framework that considers school knowledge as filtered through the perspectives of dominant groups. Sleeter then reviews research on the perspectives that structure the knowledge in school textbooks, showing how it represents narratives of dominant groups, and the impact of those perspectives on minoritized students. Then Sleeter considers ethnic studies as counter-narrative, and reviews research on the academic impact of ethnic studies on students. A limitation of the implementation of ethnic studies is that it addresses specific courses rather than transforming the whole curriculum. Sleeter developed a framework to help teachers transform their lessons and units in all disciplines, using the central ideas of ethnic studies; this framework is presented. The article concludes with a few implications for Spain from this work in the United States

Keywords: curriculum; ethnic studies; counter-narratives; curricular transformation

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es demostrar cómo, en los Estados Unidos, algunos estados y distritos escolares están transformando su currículo a través de los estudios étnicos. La existencia de estudios étnicos es el resultado de relaciones de poder desiguales en las cuales los grupos históricamente minorizados no han tenido el poder de definir cómo la educación puede servir a sus propias comunidades. Según sus activistas, los estudios étnicos no solo enseñan sobre las culturas de grupos diversos, pero también reconstruyen el currículo en torno a las contra-narrativas, perspectivas, epistemologías y visiones de grupos tratados históricamente como si sus experiencias y perspectivas fueran de menor valor. El artículo comienza con un marco teórico que considera los conocimientos escolares como filtrados desde las perspectivas de los grupos dominantes. Sleeter resume las investigaciones sobre las perspectivas que estructuran el conocimiento en los textos escolares, que representan narrativas de los grupos dominantes, y el impacto de estas perspectivas en los estudiantes minorizados. Luego Sleeter considera los estudios étnicos como contra-narrativas, y resume las investigaciones en el impacto académico de los estudios étnicos en los estudiantes. Una limitación es que la implementación de los estudios étnicos aborda cursos específicos en lugar de transformar el currículo en total. Sleeter desarrolló un marco para ayudar a los profesores en la transformación de sus lecciones y unidades en toda las disciplinas, utilizando las ideas centrales de los estudios étnicos; este marco está presentado. El artículo concluye destacando algunas implicaciones para España de este trabajo en los EE UU refugiados.

Palabras clave: currículo; estudios étnicos; contra-narrativas; transformación curricular

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In 2016, the state of California adopted a law that authorizes the development of an ethnic studies curriculum to be used in all of the state. That is, a course is being developed for secondary schools, written from the perspectives of marginalized racial and ethnicity groups. The author of this law, Luis Alejo, was motivated by his experience of personal transformation when he majored in Mexican-American Studies and Political Science at the University of California – Berkeley. Although this law refers to only one course at the secondary level, it represents the start of a significant change that is taking place in the United States with respect to the perspectives represented in the school curriculum.

In the United States, ethnic studies started in the 1960s in racial minority communities in California. This movement saw the university curriculum as a colonizing force, and irrelevant to solving community problems because it did not offer an analysis of racism or other structures of inequality. The activists demanded a relevant university curriculum taught by teachers from vulnerable communities. Thirty years later, a group of Mexican-American citizens requested of a school district in Tucson, Arizona, a plan for elementary and secondary education that centered around Mexican-American studies. That is to say, history and literature by authors and intellectuals of Mexican descent, written from the point of view of Mexican-American communities. They were tired of the schools continuing to poorly serve their children. In 1998, the Tucson schools launched a Mexican-American Studies program. It was the first district-wide ethnic studies program for primary and secondary schools.

The existence of ethnic studies is a result of unequal relations of power in which minority groups historically have not had the power to define how education can serve their own communities, in a wider context that fights for rights, resources, and opportunities. According to its activists, ethnic studies not only teach about diverse cultural groups, but also reconstructs the curriculum around counter-

narratives, perspectives, epistemologies, and visions of groups that historically have been treated as if their experiences and perspectives were of lesser value.

This article has five sections. The first part presents a theoretical framework that considers scholarly knowledge as filtered through the perspectives of dominating groups. The second part summarizes the research into the perspectives that construct knowledge in textbooks, and the impact these perspectives have on minority students. The third part considers ethnic studies as counter-narratives. Then, we consider the framework for transforming lessons and units in all disciplines, utilizing the central ideas of ethnic studies. The article concludes by suggesting some implications for Spain from these experiences in the United States.

Theoretic framework

The curriculum teaches a way to look at the world: “the commonsense interpretations we use” (Apple, 2004, p. 5) – including interpretations of the social system, of people seen as the same as us and of people that we consider different. The analysis by Apple (2004) of the relation between a capitalist economic structure, and the formations of a consciousness that accepts capitalism and one’s own position within the social class structure, is useful. His work centers in the curriculum’s role as a mediator, arguing that it is not ideologically neutral. On the contrary, what is taught in schools represents a selection from a wider array of available knowledge that can be taught. Who filters that knowledge, and with what purpose?

Brown and Brown (2015) describe the curriculum as “the construction of memory, or the form in which a nation imagines and gives shape to the people coming to know the past and the present” (p. 104). They ask whose memory is written in the curriculum. Much curriculum serves the project of constructing the nation and maintaining social cohesion around particular relations of powers. The teaching of an official curriculum that reflects the ideologies of powerful social groups

contributes to hegemony, or “the organized assemblage of symbols and practices” that maintain power and control (Apple, 2004, p. 110).

Generally, nation building projects build narratives based in myths of origin and identity of the dominating groups, and strive to build people’s personal psychological identification with that narrative.

But, what happens when the narrative that is taught in school enters into conflict with the narratives routinely learned in one’s own community? Does the inability of people “to see their own face in the past’s looking-glass” of school knowledge (Carretero, 2011, p. 36), put in doubt the usefulness or legitimacy of this knowledge? Counter-narratives from groups that occupy marginalized social positions challenge dominant world views and ideologies about the nation and its relations with power. Generally, these counter-narratives are constructed and taught in homes and communities rather than in schools. For example, Gallegos (1998) described the

enormous differences between ideologies about the United States in the curriculum he experienced during his schooling, and the ideology that he learned from family members of Mexican and indigenous descent. “The stories about how the world works that I heard and learned growing up are so radically different from explanations I learned in institutions that they are almost irreconcilable” (p 244).

Figure 1 contrasts points of view that are common in how members of dominant groups, and members of subordinate groups perceive society. While the dominating perspective portrays the social order as legitimate and the members of dominant groups as positive, it does not do the same with members of subordinate groups. To maintain social control, however, the dominant group has to persuade the members of subordinate groups to accept the legitimacy of the social order that exists, including when that means perceiving themselves as incapable, slow, of lesser intelligence or weak.

	Dominant perspective	Subordinate perspective
Nature of society	Just and open to everyone	Rigged in favor of those with most power
Nature of dominant groups	Hardworking, intelligent, earned their position, strong	Have unrecognized privileges, do not treat others justly, only worry about themselves
Nature of subordinate groups	Many lack values, respect, initiative, intelligence; can be good for manual labor	Strong, resilient and clever, have a long history of community and family knowledge

Figure 1 - Contrasting perspectives

If an official curricular narrative ignores or forgets a side of other narratives, what will it mean to transform the curriculum? Carretero (2011) examined this question in relation to the history curriculum, which traditionally has had the purpose of promoting patriotism. When the official history enters into conflict with the diverse, quotidian narratives inside and outside of the borders of a nation, who should decide the curriculum? Carretero suggests to not replace one absolute truth with another, without looking for “a relational or contextual

explanation of the “truths” elaborated or produced by history” (p. 201).

The transformation of curriculum implies teaching from different perspectives and points of view. According to Banks (2004), “The knowledge that emanates from epistemologically marginalized communities often contests existing political, economic, and educational practices and calls for fundamental change and reform. It often reveals the inconsistency between the democratic ideals

within a society and its social arrangements and educational practices” (p. 30).

Such knowledge critiques the social order and nature of dominant groups, since it is based on the historical wisdom and ideas of subordinate groups. Because this knowledge questions the legitimacy of unequal relationships of power, normally the counter-narratives, perspectives, epistemologies and cultures of minorities, or groups considered as “others,” are treated as if their experiences and perspectives were less important. The “dangerous” discussion is marginalized. As a result, Besalú Costa (2016) explains that the majority of the curricular discussion in Spain represents perspectives oriented toward cohesion instead of social criticism:

Since the end of the first decade of the new century, intercultural discussion has disappeared from public discourse, and progressive terms such as social cohesion and coexistence have taken its place. Multiculturalism and interculturality, understood as the full recognition of the rights of minorities to maintain and develop their own identity, participate on an equal level in public issues, and to be a part of a social body, are considered harmful in practice, because it is argued that it could undermine coexistence, and disturb social cohesion, opening a gateway that could encourage social division and ethnic, cultural and religious conflict (p. 29).

In the United States, even though the majority of curricula represent the perspectives of dominant groups (white, affluent), in some communities, the counter-narratives from perspectives of minorities transform the curriculum in a way that has a very positive impact on students.

Analysis of the curriculum and its impact on students

In the United States, texts (and other curricular documents to a lesser extent) have been analyzed for decades in order to determine which groups are included and excluded, which perspectives predominate in

the texts, and how diverse groups are represented. One simple method of analysis consists of counting the people in images, the people mentioned to study, or the main characters in literary stories, identifying each by race and gender (Grant & Sleeter, 2009, p. 128-134). One can also pay attention to how each group is represented: what characteristics or roles they have. Although this method of counting does not directly examine the organizing principles of the curriculum, it does suggest whose perspective dominates.

Analyses of curricula in the US demonstrate that whites continue to receive the most attention, appearing in a wider variety of roles and dominating stories and achievement lists. Even though the treatment of minority groups has improved with time, the educational landscape continues to be white. African Americans appear in a more limited range of roles than whites, and they appear incidentally instead of within a broader narrative of African American experiences (Pelligrino, Mann & Russell, 2013). More or less only 3% of texts in social science relates to Latinos (Noboa, 2005), and while literature books include Latino authors, they present the same few authors and still incorporate stereotypes (Rojas, 2010). Native Americans continue to be poorly represented, simplified, placed in the past and put in a passive role (Stanton, 2014). Asian Americans and Arab Americans only make limited appearances and are often stereotyped (Romanowski, 2009). The texts mention very little about contemporary racism, generally whitewashing to a great extent what they mention.

A more complex method of curriculum analysis consists of comparing the treatment of ideas, events, or people in the texts with books and other resources that were written by members of minority communities. In their analysis of textbook narratives, Brown and Brown (2010) began with key periods of time and narratives in African American history as they were written by African American intellectuals. Then, they closely examined how US history textbooks, observing how each text treated those specific time periods. In doing

so, their analysis compared the perspectives from which the texts were written with those of African American historians. Brown and Brown discovered that, although these texts included correct information about African American history in each of the analyzed periods, “these representations fall short of adequately illustrating how racial violence operated systematically to oppress and curtail African Americans’ opportunities and social mobility in the United States” (p. 150).

In Spain we find a few similar analyses. Samper Rasero and Garreta Bochaca (2011) explain that the few existing studies “generally focus on transmitted contents, images that support these and the language used” (p. 83). These authors were interested in how the curriculum positions the Moors and Islam within the history of Andalusia. They explain that Andalusia can be viewed as an integral part of Spain through which Muslims pass every now and then, or that it’s intimately intertwined with North Africa. Although the second perspective sees a Hispanic-Arabic brotherhood, the first sees conflict and antagonism between two very distinct cultures. The authors analyzed 246 approved school documents, including textbooks, in Catalonia. They discovered that half didn’t contain any reference to Islam, 9.5% had more than merely a summary, and just 1.5% had a full chapter or section dedicated to Islam. When they represented Islam and/or Arabs, generally they didn’t show them in Catalonia (and even less in Spain), but rather in another place (for example as a part of world history). Islam was represented mainly through photos or drawings instead of phrases or paragraphs. These images suggested that “Islam is radically exotic. . . incompatible with Western values” (p. 88) and that it’s anti-modern. East and West were portrayed as separate cultures, independent from one another. Roughly half of the references to Muslims in Catalonia refer to immigration, which is represented as a problem. Their analysis discovered that the textbooks frame Andalusia as separate and culturally distinct from northern Africa, and painted northern Africans as foreigners whose immigration to Spain causes problems.

How students perceive the curriculum depends in part on the perspectives that they represent, and in part on how they see themselves represented. In the US, some studies have been examined how students from minoritized groups view the curriculum. The majority of these studies have focused on African American students. In elementary school, many African American students notice discrepancies between viewpoints of their curriculum and what they learn at home. In middle and high school, many consider that the whiteness of their curriculum contributes to their feelings of detachment (Epstein, 2009). Likewise, Mexican-American students and Native Americans generally feel that the traditional curriculum is alienating (Martinez, 2010; Ochoa 2007).

Ethnic studies as counternarratives

In Tucson, Arizona, due to the work of Mexican-American citizens, between 1998 and 2012, the district’s Department of Mexican-American Studies worked with local schools to strengthen learning through the development of a wide range of school resources that were aligned with the curriculum standards established by the state, and that focused on intellectual frameworks of Mexican-American studies. The curriculum that they developed challenges the dominant narrative. For example, a high school program was the Social Justice Education Project. The project was based on a model of “critically compassionate intellectualism” in order to strengthen the learning of Mexican-American students (Camarota & Romero, 2009). The model includes 1) a rigorous academic curriculum that aligns with the standards, is culturally and historically relevant to the students, and focuses on social justice; 2) critical pedagogy in which the students develop critical thinking and critical awareness (following Paulo Freire), creating knowledge rather than consuming it; and 3) authentic care through which teachers demonstrate a profound respect for the students and their families as intellectuals. The curriculum immersed the students in theoretical readings of a university level, and it included a participatory

investigative project in the community. The students compiled data about manifestations of racism in their school and community, using theories from the social sciences to analyze patterns in their data, and to propose solutions to such problems. The students gave formal presentations on the results of their investigations to members of the community, in youth meetings, and in academic conferences.

The impact of the program on the students was meticulously examined, initially to document its success in the improvement of student achievement, and later to defend its existence. Cabrera and his colleagues (2014) compared the academic achievement and graduation rates for students in 11th and 12th grade who did, or did not, experience courses in Mexican-American Studies. According to their results, although students who participated in the program entered with grades that were lower in comparison to the students who did not participate, by 12th grade, they achieved scores significantly higher on the standardized state tests and had graduation rates than the comparison students.

Due to fear that the program would teach sedition, however, White political leaders at the state level managed to pass a law that prohibited ethnic studies in the state; five years later this law was annulled. Still, the struggle for ethnic studies in Tucson created a popular national movement for the transformation of education through ethnic studies. In 2014, a school district in southern California voted to adopt ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for secondary schools; this movement quickly extended through California. Today, similar efforts exist in other states such as Washington, Rhode Island, New Mexico, and Kansas.

With this national interest, my colleagues and I worried that the schools were going to adopt or create versions of ethnic studies that reflect dominant perspectives. For example, there is a plan for studies in California that conceptualizes ethnic studies as the teaching of one ethnic group at a time, each group receiving more or less four weeks of attention.

This version does not place the groups within an analysis of structures of racism; it does not address the relations between the teachers and the students of minority groups; it does not address the academic expectations for students' achievement; and it does not develop a critique of the central ideas within the curriculum as a whole.

We have elaborated a conceptual framework that will be published in a book that we are in the process of coordinating, *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* (Zavala, Cuauhtin, Sleeter, & Au, 2019). The axis of this framework is a double helix with two parts: the recovery of humanity (of the students, their families, their communities), through criticality (in the sense of Freire). We have identified four basic concepts that are reflected in the academic literature of ethnic studies and also in the work of the activists. We propose that these concepts be the foundation of curriculum for ethnic studies.

1. Indigeneity / roots. The sovereignty of indigenous tribes in the United States and in all of our planet, who still maintain relations with their foundations in ancestral lands and cultures, is a basic consideration. Every human being has ancestral native roots in the various continents of our planet. In other words, the students (and the teachers) need to recognize who has indigeneity in this place, and where our indigenous roots are from.

2. Critique of colonization / dehumanization. While peoples have been moved for most of human history and conflict and conquest have always occurred, since 1492, the western world took conquest to a global level. In the process it created new social constructions of race and racial hierarchy, that continue to have repercussions. It is important to study the roots of this system, and their current manifestations, in order to recognize the processes of dehumanization of communities and of the students in the school system; processes that can be changed.

3. Hegemony and counter-narratives. Ethnic studies offer opposing stories and counter-narratives, naming, speaking and resisting racism, colonization, poverty, and

interlocking systems of oppression. The students can learn to identify and critique the dominant narratives in relation to their lives, and learn alternative narratives and ancestral knowledge of their communities.

4. Regeneration, transformation. Considering that the purpose of ethnic studies is to eliminate racism and all interlocking forms of oppression, ethnic studies orients towards decolonization of the mind, a revitalization, celebration and memory of the indigenous roots and a critical analysis of oppression. The regenerated curriculum helps the students to overcome toxic impacts of historic amnesia and the processes of colonization and social control over themselves, and to reflect on their identities and futures. The youth are intentionally treated as intellectuals who are in the process of becoming active agents in their own communities, utilizing knowledge as a tool in their work for social justice and liberation.

When these concepts constitute a substantial part of the curriculum, the students benefit. Research studies document that, for the African-American, Mexican-American, and Indigenous students, ethnic studies produce a positive impact on their participation in the classroom, their grades on tests and their feelings of empowerment. In 2010, the National Association of Education – the teachers union in the United States – asked me to prepare a report about the research on the impact of ethnic studies on students. The union wanted this information to in order defend the teachers in Tucson, where the government was in the process of ending the program for Mexican-American Studies. Since I wrote my report (Sleeter, 2011), two other important studies have been published (Cabrera et al., 2015; Dee & Penner, 2017).

In synthesis, three studies documented high levels of participation in the classroom when the teacher used literature written by authors of the same ethnicity as the students. Studies of five literacy programs (3 for African American high school students, and 2 for Indigenous students in elementary school) documented an increase in literacy abilities. Studies of two

math and science programs (for Indigenous students) found a positive impact on academic performance and attitudes toward learning. Studies of six curricula (4 in social science, 1 in literature and 1 in “life skills”) found a positive impact on academic performance and the students’ sense of agency. Only one study failed to find a positive impact, mainly due to a conflict between how the curriculum conceptualized African American culture, and the students’ own experiences.

Ethnic studies programs designed for diverse groups of students, including White students, focused primarily on influencing the students’ understanding of racism and their attitudes about other groups. According to the research studies, the simple addition of the representation of diverse groups in the curriculum only marginally affected the attitudes of the students, because attitudes are acquired in an active, not passive manner. Lessons that directly taught about racism produced a stronger impact than lessons that included diverse groups but ignored racism. A large body of university research reports fairly consistently that classes positively affect students when they include interaction among groups.

Due to the documented success of those programs, there is now a national movement in minoritized communities to adopt ethnic studies classes and requirements. However, adding one or two classes that represent the perspectives of subordinant groups does not constitute the whole curriculum’s transformation, and does not necessarily tackle the problem of replacing one narrative for another.

Towards a process of transforming the curriculum

In my work with teachers, I developed a framework and process to help them transform their curriculum (Sleeter & Flores Carmona, 2016). The process that I will describe involves the transformation of a curriculum unit that an instructor plans to teach. The process helps teachers connect their curriculum with their local context and content knowledge from ethnic studies.

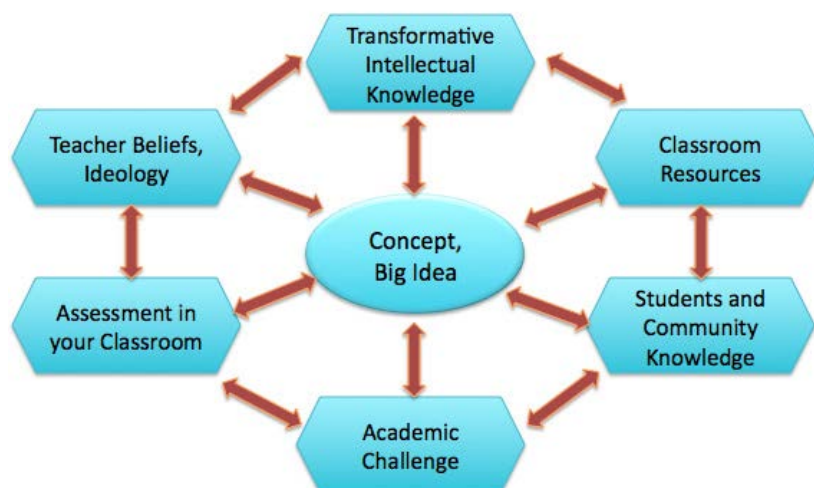


Figure 2. Framework of the design of multicultural curriculum

Teachers start by identifying an “enduring understanding” that they plan to teach, utilizing the concept of “backward design” (Wiggins & McTighe 2005). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) define *enduring understanding* as “big ideas, that have lasting value beyond the classroom (...) central to a discipline and are transferable to new situations” (p. 342). Teachers can identify enduring understandings or central concepts in any discipline. These understandings form the basis of curricular planning. Backward design refers to a planning process that starts with the identification of enduring understandings (central concepts), and how it looks when students demonstrate their comprehension. The design of assessments must be based on this analysis: on how learning appears when demonstrated. Later, the teacher considers what type of curriculum and experiences will enable the students to acquire each enduring understanding and demonstrate their new knowledge.

This helpful starting point forces teachers to analyze their curriculum – their standards, textbooks, curriculum scope and sequence – in order to describe exactly what they intend their students to gain from instruction. In the process of analyzing their curriculum, teachers generally discover a flexibility that they did not know they had. With the focus placed on learning instead of covering content, we can now ask what content and experiences best

involve students in learning.

Transformative intellectual knowledge refers to the “concepts, paradigms, themes, and explanations” that emerged in the thriving critical traditions of writings on ethnic and women’s studies (Banks, 1993, p. 9). The ethnic studies conceptual framework described earlier synthesizes four fundamental concepts that lie within transformative intellectual knowledge. While it is useful that teachers know these concepts, it is even more useful to be attentive to them in the works that they read. I ask of the teachers to investigate the ethnic studies knowledge that directly relates to the central concept of the lessons or unit that they are planning. They must read academic literature produced by a historically marginalized group in relationship to that concept; typically, they need help in identifying what to read. They write a brief essay that not only describes the contents that they may include in their curriculum, but also examines the perspective in literature about the central concept in and of itself.

I ask teachers to investigate the knowledge that their students bring to school from their homes and their communities, and to organize their lessons in such a way that the students can activate and use such knowledge. For example, teachers can interview some of the students, asking what they already know, or what they think they know, about the central idea that the teacher is planning to teach.

Generally, such discussions reveal a combination of incorrect assumptions, unexpected questions that the students would like to explore, and previous knowledge that students already have upon which the teacher can expand.

Intellectual rigor refers to the extent to which a given unit intellectually challenges students. A great problem are the low expectations for minority students or for those who come from economically poor communities. Therefore, I involve the teachers in a critical examination of their academic expectations for their students; I use Bloom's taxonomy as a tool to analyze each of their curricula. We consider what their teaching would be like if the teachers were preparing their students for college, and if they support them in their learning. The teachers develop scaffolding strategies to use with students while they learn to complete a complex academic problem.

This focus on transforming the curriculum has one great limitation in comparison to the creation and teaching of courses on ethnic studies: the teacher's knowledge of the body of academic texts written by members of minoritized groups. The investigation mentioned earlier that teachers do regarding the ethnic studies knowledge that is directly related to the central concept the teacher plans to teach, represents only the beginning of the larger project on learning of the points of view, experiences, ancestral knowledge, and intellectual knowledge of a group whose perspectives have been subjugated. In California, some universities have experimented with the requirement that teachers in training take a course on ethnic studies (for example African-American history) to develop their knowledge base. In addition, some universities in the US have programs to prepare more teachers from minority communities.

Implications for Spain

In the US, ethnic studies address unequal power relations based on race and ethnicity to transform the curriculum in terms of the perspectives and knowledge of minoritized groups, and to treat students who are from

these groups as intellectuals and future active citizens. Studies have consistently shown that this type of transformation has a positive impact on students. But since the majority of the work on ethnic studies in high schools results in the creation of a new course (usually in the social sciences), what is needed is an integral transformation of the curriculum, the teaching, and the relationships between teachers and the communities that they serve.

Obviously, there are many differences between Spain and the US. I'm not suggesting that one can transplant the practices from one context to the other. However, I believe that there are ideas that are implemented in the US that could prove useful for educators in Spain.

Spain has a diverse population. In 2011 around 12% of the Spanish population was immigrants, mostly coming from Eastern Europe, Morocco, and Latin America. In addition, there's diversity in gender, upbringing, region and social class. Of equal importance to cultural and linguistic diversity is the consideration of relationships of power, especially the power to define how families and communities are represented, and the rights and opportunities that they have.

Reflecting on the analysis of textbooks discussed before, the main question was: From whose point of view do we teach students to view the world? To view themselves? Figure 1 suggests the consideration that texts portray society as fair for all, and subordinate communities in terms of personal, cultural and intellectual characteristics that they are missing. If this is true, we must ask, what type of impact does this perspective have on minority students? On Spanish students from predominant (non-minority) groups?

In their study, Aguado, Ballestreros, and Malik (2003) discovered that, "In general, students' knowledge and attitudes towards cultural diversity is quite stereotyped, and limited to those groups in their class" (p. 57). For dominant groups, their perspectives on the social order, inequality, and "other" groups reflect stereotypes. Students from subordinate groups experience problems, but they are not taught have a critical frame to analyze them.

For example, Aguado, Ballestreros, and Malik write that “Some Roma children who do not perform well in school state, ‘I don’t understand many things,’ ‘I work little because I’m not interested in what they tell me, I think it is useless’” (p. 57). In addition, the authors note that, “In general, teachers perceive cultural differences as a problem or a threat. They even try to avoid talking about differences, in fear of fostering them” (p. 58).

Based on our experience with ethnic studies in the US, I suggest that subordinate perspectives exist that, when they form a part of a school curriculum, can make minoritized students reconsider how they perceive themselves and their futures. Although learning to view the world through the eyes of marginalized groups can feel like a threat to the members of dominant groups, ultimately, such learning moves dialogue toward a deeper level than it otherwise would be.

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