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The stories we tell: exploring narrative in education for justice and equality in multicultural contexts

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of narrative in enabling educational processes to support justice and equality in multicultural societies. It draws on Bhabha's (2003) concept "the right to narrate", arguing that conceptions of multicultural education which focus exclusively on the nation are insufficient in a globalized and interdependent world. National narratives, promoted through history and citizenship education, not only deny minorities' perspectives but also encourage exclusive visions of the nation, maintaining the hegemony of the nation-state. Neighboring nations tell alternative, often contradictory, stories through their school curricula. Processes are closer to propaganda than the educational goal of critical thinking and contribute little to the realisation of justice and peace at home or the wider world. Promoting nationalism and a sense of national superiority may weaken the position of migrants and undermine regional and global cooperation. The paper argues we need to rethink multicultural education. In particular, we need to re-imagine the nation as cosmopolitan. Drawing on the tools of the internationally-agreed human rights project, itself a cosmopolitan endeavor, and on principles of human rights education, it is possible to develop a concept of multicultural education which supports justice and equality at all scales, from the local to the global.

Keywords: human rights; cosmopolitanism; nation-building; history; diversity; universality

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Introduction

In our global age, we need tools which will support educational research and practice that can be applied in a range of contexts: local, cultural, national and international. This paper focuses on the role of narrative in enabling educational processes to support justice and equality in multicultural societies. Drawing on Bhabha's (2003) concept, "the right to narrate", the paper focuses first on the potential of narrative to contribute to education for justice and peace within multicultural societies, looking at the theory and practice of narrative as a tool for justice, equality, peace and human rights.

Secondly, the paper considers problematic ways in which narrative continues to be used in schools, in a wide variety of global contexts, for an exclusive framing of the nation and national education. It argues that multicultural education needs to be revised and revisited in our globalized world, if it is to be fit for purpose. The paper critiques current conceptions of multicultural education which focus too heavily on the nation, suggesting that this focus may limit the effectiveness of multicultural education as a means for enabling greater justice and equality. Since multiculturalism has come under attack in recent years, particularly in Europe (Council of Europe Group of Eminent Persons, 2011), it should be emphasized that the purpose of this critique is not to challenge multiculturalism as such. Rather it is to examine how multicultural education might be strengthened, to incorporate cosmopolitan goals which recognize our common humanity and which enable all learners, from both privileged and less privileged positions, to understand the inter-related nature of our common future.

One goal of the paper is to offer a theoretical framework to those wishing to denationalize school curricula so as to allow learners to find their own places and their own identities within an inclusive collective history. It is these counter-narratives which are critical in telling inclusive stories within multicultural communities and multicultural nation-states and which can contribute to a form of multicultural education which may genuinely contribute to greater justice and equality, based on cosmopolitan perspectives and on agreed international principles of human rights.

The potential of narrative

In struggles for justice across the world, narratives have been used to powerful effect. One example is the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa led by the African National Congress (ANC). In mobilizing support both at home and internationally, the movement's narrative deployed the struggles of individual leaders and the personal sacrifices they made to realize freedom, most famously, those made by Winnie and Nelson Mandela following the latter's arrest in 1962 and subsequent trial and imprisonment until 1990 (Mandela, 1994; Smith, 2010). Various other art forms, including theatre, musical productions, and songs were used to tell the stories of countless other individuals who dedicated their lives to achieving freedom. Today, their stories and those of ordinary individuals coping in extraordinary circumstances are re-told in museums, including that of Robben Island, the District Six Museum in Cape Town, and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. As Osler and Zhu (2011, p. 223) observe:

> The anti-apartheid struggle also developed a collective narrative built upon an entitlement to human rights, equality and dignity, whereby the ANC was [able] to call upon governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations from around the world to show solidarity and support for its campaign.

Significantly, following the ANC's victory in the country's 1994 first democratic elections, South Africa established a new constitution based explicitly on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948.

Teachers across Europe and in other parts of the world also draw on the South African story and that of Nelson Mandela, as well as numerous other inspiring characters from around the world, such as Martin Luther King, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Mohandas Gandhi, to encourage students to develop a sense of justice and solidarity with the struggles of their fellow humanity across the globe. They may also draw on films, novels and plays to encourage empathy with struggles for rights. This method of narrative within human rights education is advocated and developed by Osler and Starkey (2010), who draw on the stories of "unknown" individuals to introduce their academic text on human rights education.

The post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (2003, pp.180-181) emphasizes the importance of "the right to narrate", suggesting that the inclusion of learners' own stories may allow them to find their own places within an inclusive collective history:

> To protect the 'right to narrate' is to protect a range of democratic imperatives: it assumes there is an equitable access to those institutions – schools, universities, museums, libraries , theatres – that give you a sense of a collective history and the means to turn those materials into a narrative of your own.

Bhabha does not claim that schools can act alone. He recognizes that such an assured, empowered sense of "selfhood"' depends on a public culture in which the rights-holder is confident his or her story will be heard and acted upon. This, he asserts, depends in turn on civil society's readiness to defend "the right to take part in cultural life" (UN, 1966, article 15).

The curriculum which follows from this right necessarily includes opportunities to explore and reflect on various identities and cultural attributes; and create personal narratives and processes of self-learning. Effectively, narratives can inspire learners to tell their own individual and collective stories and struggles for justice (Delanty, 2003; Osler, 2011b). It is through this use of narrative that teachers can contribute to the realization of justice, peace and equality as they empower learners not only to articulate their own rights but also advocate for the rights of others. Bhabha's insights are valuable to a human rights framework because they give a central place to the community of learners and to their experiences of justice and injustice. In this way, human rights enable a broad vision of our common humanity and our shared struggles, looking beyond the immediate to the global community, and at the same time remaining rooted in the everyday experiences and struggles of learners' own lives and those of the community of learners.

The exclusive narrative of the nation-state
As Osler and Zhu (2011) confirm: "Bhabha's 'right to narrate' is part of a global ethic which challenges and interrogates systems which create hegemonic narratives and which silence marginal voices". Such hegemonic narratives about the nation were developed when nationalism was at its height. This happened in Europe at the end of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth centuries.

Norway, for example, established its constitution in 1814 and finally achieved independence from Sweden in 1905, after centuries of rule from Denmark and Sweden. In the subsequent policy of Norwegianization, originally conceived as a process of liberation from Swedish political and Danish cultural hegemony, schools were given a central role, becoming a powerful instrument of Norwegian nation-building. One goal was to incorporate the indigenous Sami and Kvens people into the new Norwegian nation-state. Arguably, the intention was to include (to achieve unity), rather than to exclude. Despite this, nation-building through schooling –which continues today in an implicit form - has had an oppressive function in relation to minorities (Osler and Lybaek, 2014). Today the Sami have a degree of self-determination and guarantees of cultural autonomy through the Sami

Parliament (opened in 1989). Yet, as Lile (2011) has found, the Norwegian education system has been slow in meeting the entitlements of learners (both from the Sami minority and the mainstream) under article 29 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which include:

> the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own (UN, 1989).

Lile's study of Norwegian learners' knowledge of Sami history and the discrimination to which they have been subjected suggests that the school curriculum is not meeting young people's entitlements under Article 29 (1) of the CRC to develop respect for the cultural identity of indigenous peoples. Moreover, formulations in the core curriculum relating to "loyalty to heritage" and "respect and appreciation of what people before us have accomplished" are weak (Lile, 2011; Osler and Lybaek, 2014). A century after independence, Egen (2013, 2014) concludes that nation-building has had an oppressive impact on minorities, suggesting that today it might be better organized by adhering to a different principle, that of equity through diversity. A principle of inclusion through mainstreaming (emphasizing sameness) needs to be replaced by one whereby recognition of social and cultural diversity is reflected within the school curriculum. Such recognition implies acknowledgement of diversity within groups (minority and mainstream) as well as between them.

Norway is by no means unique in fostering nation-building through schooling. Osler and Starkey (2011) examine how national identity is constructed through the citizenship curriculum, contrasting France and England, questioning the value of educating for a single national identity in a globalized world. İnce (2012) carries out a similar exercise, reviewing the Turkish curriculum. Osler and Starkey (2001, p.303) conclude, in the case of England and France:

> Neither programme of study gives significant weight to the perspectives of minorities. The French programme of study roundly condemns racism but fails to explore it. …The English programme of study recognises [various] … ethnic groups [and] … expects individuals to challenge prejudice and discrimination, but does not consider collective responses nor the possibility of institutional racism.

Reid *et al*. (2009) confirm that this pattern of educating for a singular national identity through citizenship is predominant across the globe. History education commonly plays a similar role. Carretero (2011), in his study of the ways in which patriotism is constructed in the curriculum in Argentina, the former USSR, the United States, Germany, Japan, Spain and Mexico, observes how school history differs from the academic study of history, with the former regularly constituting little more than an uncritical exercise, building loyalty to the nation, one that sits uncomfortably with one of the ostensible goals of schooling, that of critical thinking. Not only that, but many of the narratives promoted through school history in these jurisdictions tell very different, often contradictory stories to those told in neighboring nations, with silences around particular events which other nations emphasize, and vice versa. Such school histories shut down, rather than open up, spaces for international understanding. Equally seriously, they maintain conditions which threaten peace and stability, as in the conflict at the time of writing between China and Japan over the uninhabited Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea, known as Senkaku in Tokyo and Diaoyu by Beijing.

Re-thinking multicultural education
For those wishing to denationalize school curricula so as allow learners to find their own places and their own identities within an inclusive collective history, a multicultural

curriculum may, at first sight, appear to offer alternative perspectives which enable a more inclusive sense of belonging among diverse learners. In particular, a multicultural curriculum appears to provide opportunities for telling the stories of minority communities and meeting the needs of those students who lie outside of the (national) mainstream.

Here I wish to look more closely at the potential of multicultural education and examine reasons why educators committed to equality and justice should be wary of adopting multicultural initiatives uncritically. In doing so, this paper does not align itself with either political rhetoric or academic arguments which suggest that multiculturalism or multicultural education are moribund, or that efforts to promote multicultural education are necessarily counter-productive or damaging to minority students.

In England, as Warmington (2014) and others have noted, various criticisms of multiculturalism and particularly of multicultural education have been made from within the academy. Writers such as Hazel Carby (1982) and Sivanandan (1983) recognized the inadequacies of policy approaches during the 1960s and 1970s which failed to build on the educational activism within Black British communities or recognize the agency of Black British learners. These early forms of multicultural education ignored "the wider social antagonism in which schooling was embedded" relying exclusively on innovations in curriculum, on tackling teacher prejudice or on intercultural exchange (Warmington, 2014, p.70).

Developments in multicultural education, designed to promote an explicit anti-racist perspective, were frequently attacked in the press. In 1986, a fatal stabbing of a 13-year-old Manchester schoolboy Ahmed Ullah at Burnage High School by a White student led to a public inquiry. The Macdonald report into the tragedy was critical of the school's failure to provide a practical anti-racist strategy which engaged the whole school community in tackling racist violence and bullying (Macdonald *et al*., 1989). The Inquiry concluded that the school had focused on symbolic anti-racist gestures, rather than a workable anti-racist policy with practical outcomes. In the national press, however, a different story was told, with anti-racism being held responsible for Ahmed Ullah's death. From this period, multicultural and anti-racist education was widely portrayed as something doctrinaire and counter-productive, and therefore to be abandoned in schools.

In the 1980s the reality was that efforts to develop effective multicultural, anti-racist strategies to tackle educational injustices and inequality in England were piecemeal. Many were creative and worthwhile, while others were almost certainly flawed. All such efforts were undermined by a Conservative government which was pursuing a wider neo-liberal agenda of reform. By the mid-1990s there was little left of multicultural policies and practices within education. Local curriculum innovation was effectively wiped out by a new highly prescriptive national curriculum.

In Europe in the early twenty-first century, educational scholarship addressing education in multicultural contexts has taken place within a broader European political context often hostile to the concept of multiculturalism. At the same time, the first two decades of the century have seen an increase in Islamophobic and far-right extremism and hate speech. Senior European political figures, including French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and UK Prime Minister David Cameron have attacked multiculturalism (Council of Europe Group of Eminent Persons, 2011). Cameron claimed "state multiculturalism" undermines community, while Merkel asserted multiculturalism has "failed utterly" and that Germans and foreign workers cannot "live happily side by side" (Osler, 2012a). Ironically, neither Germany nor France has ever aspired to multiculturalism, nor has Britain ever developed comprehensive multicultural policies or "multicultural citizenship" (Kymlicka, 1996).[i] What has not been tried cannot be said to have failed. Significantly, these European leaders are criticized for "reacting in a defensive and

unimaginative way" to the challenges of the twenty-first century, instead of confronting and challenging populism and extremism (Council of Europe Group of Eminent Persons, 2011).

My own concerns about the limitations of multicultural education in the early twenty-first century are framed not within one national setting but within a wider international context and within the context of globalization. The first is that multicultural education (or in Europe "intercultural education") policies are (like those of citizenship education) framed very explicitly and often exclusively in terms of the nation. At best, one of the goals of multicultural education is to realize justice for a minority group (indigenous, national minority or migrant group) within the nation-state or one of its constituent parts, such as a specific city. Most commonly, policy initiatives involve innovations in curriculum, addressing teacher attitudes and some form of intercultural exchange, as discussed above, rather than anti-racist initiatives which address the structural inequalities in the school system and/or wider society. Such initiatives fail to recognize that schools are part of wider communities and need to engage with those communities in creating the social and political conditions for greater justice and equality.

Secondly, anti-racist and multicultural scholars worldwide have been significantly influenced by an impressive body of work in this field from the United States. Many of the struggles in the U.S. for equitable schooling, including struggles for multicultural curricula and "culturally responsive" (Gay, 2010) or "culturally relevant" teaching (Ladson Billings,1995) have taken place on a local or national stage with little awareness of how international human rights standards might support these struggles or indeed of parallel struggles elsewhere for equal access for all to quality schooling. Thus, the concept of solidarity with other struggles for justice in education, as well as opportunities to identify allies elsewhere in the world, have sometimes been overlooked. Generally, the focus has remained exclusively on the U.S. Consequently, efforts elsewhere to build on this work may focus on the national context, rather than conceive of multicultural education taking place in a globalized world where international developments, as well national and local policy policies and practices, may impact on questions of justice and equality at school.

Globally, many multicultural educators draw for inspiration on the substantial theoretical work of James A. Banks, who has, since the 1960s conducted pioneering work, most recently in the field of education for democracy and diversity in an age of globalization (Banks, 2006; Banks *et al*., 2005). Banks draws heavily on the tension in policy and practice between national unity and recognition of diversity in education. While Banks himself places a central emphasis on social justice in resolving this tension, and has brought together the work of scholars from a broad range of international contexts, one danger is that policy-makers who hold a deficit view of minority communities emphasize unity at the expense of diversity and particularly at the expense of policy goals which address social justice.

Banks (2010) identifies five dimensions of multicultural education, relating to curriculum content; knowledge construction; equity pedagogy; prejudice reduction; and an empowering school culture. The first four primarily address curriculum and pedagogy within the classroom (not a protected space, but strongly influenced by educational policy and structures). The fifth, school culture, has a dynamic relationship with broader structural and organizational frameworks within and beyond the school. All five dimensions implicitly or explicitly address questions of power and social justice within schooling, yet in practice the model may be adopted without serious consideration of structural inequalities or asymmetrical power relations.

None of these dimensions rules out a vision of social justice which extends beyond the nation, yet each is likely to be understood exclusively or predominantly within a narrow national framework, where national political and educational cultures emphasize the nation and national identity over and above our common humanity. My point is that each of Banks'

(2010) five dimensions has the potential to be interpreted through a broader lens, but prevailing national political cultures are likely to discourage this, reinforcing a nationalist interpretation of multicultural education. Some multicultural educators may work to build in global perspectives, and some forms of multicultural education may have an international element, yet the prevailing model remains national.

In the early twenty-first century, U.S. anti-racist education scholars have drawn on Critical Race Theory (CRT).[ii] CRT has been applied, to a lesser degree, in the UK.[iii] While some of the key concepts of CRT, such as story-telling/narrative, work well in different international settings, it remains to be seen whether this theory, which has focused first and foremost on the African-American experience, will travel well, both within Europe, and more particularly to other regions of the globe.

Two theorists, both with cosmopolitan roots, Appiah (1997, 2007) and Parekh (2006) may offer us a theoretical framework in which we can constructively critique multiculturalism and multicultural education, enabling a dynamic and global perspective. Appiah reminds us that culture is not fixed but constantly changing and, although he adopts a skeptical approach to the term multiculturalism, highlights the ethical dilemmas of addressing cultural diversity at a global, rather than national scale. Appiah is searching for a global ethical framework within which differences can be resolved. The principles of international human rights, while not providing neat solutions, do offer a space in which ethical questions can be debated cross-culturally. Appiah highlights the fact that in many cases we can agree what to do, even when we cannot agree why we should do it. Parekh emphasizes that since human beings are cultural beings we need to give attention to cultural questions and to recognize that human rights and human identity itself need to be understood in a culturally mediated manner, without detracting from some fundamental principles of equality and justice which underpin those rights.

By combining the insights of Appiah and Parekh, it may be possible to envisage a form of education for justice and peace built on cosmopolitan principles, which acknowledges the importance of addressing immediate injustices within the school and community, but which also promotes a sense of solidarity and commitment to those struggling for justice in distant places, recognising that we live within an interdependent world. As the U.S. civil rights campaigner Malcom X noted, we cannot always depend on the support of our neighbors to realize justice, we may need to build international alliances and global networks to guarantee the realization of justice and equality. He argued towards the end of his life that the term human rights should replace civil rights, since then "anybody, anywhere on this earth can become your ally" (1965, in Clark, 1992, p.175). He wrote:

> We can never get civil rights in America until our human rights are first restored. We will never be recognized as citizens there until we are first recognized as humans (Malcom X, 1964).

Not only does multicultural education, focused on the nation and premised without reference to a globalized society, pose particular challenges for our global age but, in seeking to add on multicultural perspectives to a curriculum which has been conceived within a narrow national framework, it may work directly against the principles of justice and equality. Policy, ostensibly designed to address democracy and cultural diversity, risks adverse results. Here, I illustrate this through an example related to the implementation of the citizenship curriculum for England, first introduced in the year 2000.

In 2006, following the London bombings of July 2005, the UK government invited Sir Keith Ajegbo, a former school principal, to lead the Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review Panel which would examine how ethnic, religious and cultural diversity might be addressed within the school curriculum for England, specifically through the teaching of modern British social and cultural history and citizenship. The Ajegbo report (DfES 2007a),

was commissioned at a time of heightened public debate about citizenship, national identity, the integration of minorities and multiculturalism, debate which had been going on from 2001 when riots had badly effected a number of northern towns. This debate was heightened by the 2001 attacks on the U.S. and particularly by the July 2005 suicide bombings in London, carried out by young men brought up and educated in Britain (Osler, 2008).

In commissioning the Ajegbo report, the government made a direct link between the need to counter terrorist activity and the strengthening of national identity and British values through the curriculum. The official press release stated: "The report was commissioned after concern about growing extremism and division in society after the London terrorist bombings" (DfES 2007b). So, from the beginning, efforts to incorporate a new strand to the curriculum were built first and foremost upon concerns about security and terrorism, rather than upon realizing greater justice and equality among learners.

Ajegbo proposed a new strand in the citizenship education framework on "identity and diversity: living together in the UK" which would complement the three existing strands proposed in the original Crick report (QCA, 1998), which was extremely influential in shaping the citizenship education curriculum in England. The government accepted the recommendation adding this new strand to the three original inter-related strands: social and moral responsibility towards those in authority and each other; community involvement, including service to the community; and political literacy or the knowledge, skills and values to be effective in public life. This new development was significant because although Crick had advocated discussing long-standing diversity in the UK, he had particularly resisted addressing race or racism directly in the curriculum (Osler, 2000 and 2008). This attempt to graft "diversity" onto an existing curricular framework, gave the appearance of change but in fact did very little to contribute to greater equality and justice through education. On the positive side it:

- helped set a climate which might encourage schools to take forward questions of diversity and identity in a pragmatic way
- referenced the legal framework requiring schools as public bodies to promote race equality
- reminded school inspectors of their obligations to inspect provision of measures to promote community cohesion, and of schools accountability through inspection.

However, the report failed to comment on why five years after legislation has been passed, school inspectors were failing to highlight very low levels of compliance with the race equality law. Significantly, the Ajegbo report, like the Crick report before it:
- failed to address or even highlight society's structural inequalities and barriers to citizenship
- failed to recognize the perspectives of youth, particularly minority youth, in relation to their own schooling
- endorsed an old model of multiculturalism prevalent in the 1970s and early 1980s which emphasized a study of the other and "celebration" of different identities
- trivialized the barriers to full citizenship and some of the gross injustices and human rights abuses in the world by its dismissive discussion of global inequalities linking them to mere "political correctness"
- ignored recent research on critical multiculturalism and seemingly misrepresented the government-commissioned research review (Maylor *et al.,* 2007) designed to support it (Osler 2008).

Effectively, an attempt to graft a strand on diversity onto an established citizenship curriculum did very little to promote equality and justice and, by referring back to an old model of multiculturalism which had been shown to have been wanting, missed a key opportunity to address a new social and political climate in which new forms of racism (notably, Islamophobia coupled with right wing extremism) were flourishing. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the climate in which it was commissioned, and concerns about terror and security. Nevertheless, the episode shows how well-meaning people with a sense of justice were co-opted into a project which did little to enable justice and equality through multicultural education.

Cosmopolitanism and human rights at home
I contend, that to revitalize multicultural education in the twenty-first century, we need first to re-imagine the nation as cosmopolitan as well as multicultural. This does not mean an abandonment of the struggles for justice and equality in schooling at the local and national levels, but it does involve conceptualising the curriculum so that it does not promote an exclusive national identity or encourage leaners (from either mainstream or minority communities) to position themselves as part of a nation whose interests are necessarily in opposition to those of other nations. This involves recognition that in struggles for justice and peace (local, national or international) solidarities and alliances with people in distant places are often critical, and that we are living in an interdependent world. The nation-state continues to play a significant role in this interdependent world. Not least among considerations is the responsibility of the nation-state to uphold and protect the human rights of those living within its territories.

The concept of cosmopolitanism and understandings of the universal have been influential in early twenty-first century discourses relating to multicultural, international and human rights education. Human rights are necessarily cosmopolitan rather than national in their conception, enabling those engaged in struggle in one context to unite in solidarity with others to support their cause. This has been recognized by oppressed groups in many different settings. This paper has already highlighted the struggle of the African National Congress against Apartheid in South Africa. Other struggles which have drawn on human rights are the civil rights struggle in the U.S. in the mid-twentieth century and the on-going struggle among Kurds for a Kurdish homeland. It is this cosmopolitan vision which gives human rights such potency.

Human rights provide a broad perspective for multicultural learning, opportunities to promote solidarity beyond national boundaries, and one which is inclusive of a range of identities. Human rights avoid a singular exclusive focus on the nation which is a recurrent (and often exclusive) element of citizenship curricula, as discussed above. But human rights abuses and struggles are not just those which happen in the past or in distant places.

A number of countries, including South Korea, have made important efforts to introduce human rights education (HRE), with the aim of educating for equality, peace and justice within local communities and a nation which is increasingly recognized as multicultural. Human rights education must necessarily address education *about* rights (knowledge, values, human rights mechanisms), education *in* or *through* rights (school ethos, educational structures, learning in a way which respects the rights of leaners and teachers), and education *for* rights (including skills for engaging in struggle and transformation) (see UN, 2011; Osler, 2012b). Developing a sense of solidarity at all scales from the local to the international is critical. Rather than seeing cosmopolitan and national commitments in tension, it is possible to reconceptualize the nation as cosmopolitan.

In teaching for justice and equality it is important to remember that there are multiple axes of differentiation – including economic, political, cultural and experiential. It is

important to recognize the complexity of subsequent human experiences and societal developments, rather than reducing or artificially separating these dimensions. The concept of intersectionality – which signifies the complex inter-weaving of strands of social life - enables us to better interpret how learners experience justice/injustice and equality /inequality in education. It is a concept which is implicit within human rights (Osler, 2014). Finally, it is worth considering the limitations of human rights as a concept to inform multicultural education.

Is the human rights framework sufficient for the task?
I suggest we need to re-visit two key human rights concepts, universality and recognition, if we are to develop a theory and practice of human rights education (HRE) which meets the needs of multicultural societies.

Universality
Universality is a key concept within human rights. Yet some scholars have challenged the notion of the universal, by seeking to illustrate how discourses promoted by the powerful often serve to regulate the knowledge and values of the powerless (Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1999). These critiques remind us of asymmetrical power relations which need to be considered in any analysis and in curricula addressing human rights, cultural diversity, justice and injustice: " There is the risk that human rights, designed to be liberating, can become part of a hegemonic discourse, used to control, if rights and principles are applied without dialogue and without consideration of people's actual experiences" (Osler, 2015, p.263).

The form of education or curriculum which might follow from this must necessarily include opportunities to explore and reflect on various identities and cultural attributes; and create personal narratives and processes of self-learning. Effectively, it needs to allow learners to develop new collective narratives through which they can together make sense of the world (Osler, 2011b). These counter-narratives do much to ensure that human rights do not serve to universalize, but are understood within these cultural settings. At the same time, learners are given opportunities and tools to look critically at culture, including their own. The same principles are applied to all cultures, namely those of equality, justice and indivisibility of rights, but rights themselves are not interpreted through the lens of the hegemonic mainstream culture. Learners' own struggles for justice are foregrounded, as are their own life experiences, though the telling of these individual and collective narratives. These narratives become the inclusive new stories within multicultural communities, themselves contributing to a form of multicultural education which may genuinely contribute to greater justice and equality.

Recognition
The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights opens with the concept of recognition: "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family". The concept of recognition of equal and inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights is fundamental to the human rights project. Article 6 states that "Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law" and Article 7 affirms this equal recognition extends to equality before the law and protection under the law against discrimination.

When children enter schools they do so in specific global locations and with specific positionings in histories which privilege or repress their voices. Their identities, including ascribed identities, are related to their lived experiences. An ascribed identity is not chosen by

the individual, but designated, often by powerful others. In the context of schooling, students may be ascribed an identity by teachers or education policy-makers. This has happened all too often, in the context of multicultural education, when children have found themselves in classrooms where the teacher is expounding their cultures, from the mainstream educator's perspective. The processes of ascribing an identity may be complex, as in the following example, told to me with some humor by a young British Sikh teacher in the early 1990s, recalling her experiences at school a decade earlier:

> I was never really aware in school that I was any different from my English or Afro-Caribbean friends, because religion wasn't a very strong force in my life. ...It wasn't until the third year of secondary school that one of the teachers actually did a small unit on Sikhism... and it was all about Sikhs on horseback, Sikhs are soldiers, they are a sort of military. It wasn't until then that I started to make connections with something I have got at home, and the pictures that are hanging on our wall... But I remember thinking, I don't think my father used to ride a horse [*laughs*], because that as the kind of image portrayed (Balbir, in Osler, 1997, pp. 85-86).

Balbir was presented with an essentialised portrayal of Sikhism that bears little relationship to her everyday life. Yet, as an adult and as a teacher, she recollects this "small unit on Sikhism" as the first time her identity or cultural background was referenced at school. A study of history which enabled Balbir to research her own history and that of her family might have uncovered very different understandings of what it meant to be a Sikh in 1980s Britain and contributed to a richer understanding of the recent collective history of the students in her class, in a West Midlands school, in an area which had attracted many migrant workers to its heavy industries, but which by the 1980s was experiencing economic change with such industries in decline. As a student, Balbir had some difficulties in relating her own experiences to the study unit. No doubt it was equally difficult for other students from different cultural backgrounds to make sense of this decontextualized attempt to develop a multicultural curriculum, or for these students to relate it to their own experiences of living and studying in a multicultural community.

The modern human rights project and legal framework grew out of a period of war and atrocities characterized by processes of dehumanization. Recognition of equal human dignity is essential to the human rights project. It is important, if education itself is to be a humanizing, rather than a dehumanizing, experience that asymmetrical power relations in the school and wider society are acknowledged and addressed.

Conclusion

This paper has set out to explore the potential of narrative, which may serve to promote greater justice and human rights in education or, alternatively, to undermine these goals. Guaranteeing Bhabha's "right to narrate" allows the opening up of school curricula to the individual and collective stories of learners, which in turn challenge the hegemonic narrative of the nation, allowing for a counter-narrative which might empower learners. Within *de facto* multicultural nation-states in our globalized world, it is no longer adequate (if it ever was) to develop a multicultural curriculum which merely reflects the stories of a diverse nation. Instead, it is important to re-imagine the nation as both multicultural and cosmopolitan, drawing on the international human rights framework to develop a theory and practice of multicultural education which will support justice and peace at all scales from the local to the global and enable students to make links between their own struggles and those of other people in their own neighborhoods and in distant places. The international human rights framework provides a starting point for debate and democratic dialogue about the nature of this curriculum, incorporating the perspectives and struggles of communities, both mainstream and minority.

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[i] For decades Germany denied citizenship to "guest-workers", on the premise that German citizenship could only be acquired through bloodlines. Britain has had piecemeal multicultural polices, for example, in education, dependent on the commitment of specific local authorities (Figueroa, 2004; Tomlinson, 2009; Osler, 2011a).

[ii] Critical Race Theory (CRT) builds on the work of U.S. critical legal scholars from the 1970s and has been developed by U.S. educators such as Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995). Drawing on key concepts such as interest convergence, contradiction, closure, and storytelling/ narrative, this body of work has tended to focus on the African- American experience in the U.S.

[iii] See Rollock 2012; Warmington, 2012.