

## **Intercultural pedagogics.**

**Corrie Tijsseling, FEAPDA-congress, 14-16 October 2005. Geneve, Switzerland.**

### **Introduction**

#### SHEET 2

From 1998 to 2004 i worked at the institute Viataal in Sint-Michielsgestel, the Netherlands. This institute provides care and education for all people with limitations in hearing, vision and speech. As a project manager, it was my responsibility to develop a policy and praxis to prevent sexual abuse and intimidation. This project was set up after the discovery of sexual abuse among pupils and clients at Viataal. Our research found that pupils and clients had little awareness concerning sexuality, values concerning sexuality and had little autonomy in their behaviour. The cause of this can be found in the lack of information and knowledge that results from the communication problems that pupils and clients have with parents, teachers and other carers. For children from ethnic minorities it was found that they have a different perspective on society, values and relations. Especially with girls it was found that there are many secrets, and they often did not want their parents and family to know that they had been victims of sexual abuse and asked professionals to keep it all secret. Also they told that they often change clothes in the taxi to and from school, and that they experience a conflict between the expectations from them at home and at school. Boys too experience identity-problems and a conflict between the culture at home and the culture at school. These youngsters already have an identity-conflict concerning their deafness: being deaf has to be given a place in their identity. We can thus conclude that deaf children from ethnic minorities are challenged more in their development, and I have not even mentioned language here.

The project that was carried out under my supervision had the name RESPECT and one of its goals was to change the culture in Viataal: from a catholic institute where issues were little discussed openly to an institute with respect for other religions and cultures and an environment where all issues concerning behaviour and values are discussed in an open dialogue. In this, it is important that everyone is equal, but not everyone is the same. You are different, and it is a right to be different. But to be able to work with this concept, we do need to develop an intercultural pedagogics in the education of deaf children, a pedagogical theory and praxis in which one is aware of other parental styles and in which diversity is respected.

#### SHEET 3

### **Parental styles in other cultures.**

What do we know about parental styles in different cultures? Gardiner et al. (1998) mention differences in parental styles in: (duration of) breast-feeding, sleeping (with parents or in a separate bed), physical distance (carry the child all day or leave it in a cradle), games and playing (emphasis on sharing or on independency) and differences in values concerning education and behaviour in society.

#### SHEET 4

Huiberts et al. (2002) researched the attachment to parents and behavioural autonomy with Moroccan youngsters. It was assumed that the members of a collective culture give up on a part of their personal autonomy. The price of an individualistic culture is that in exchange for more personal autonomy, there is lesser attachment between members of that culture. People in collectivistic cultures have closer, but hierarchical relations. Youngsters of other cultures always carry cultural baggage with them, even in further generations. The results that were found in this research show that Moroccan youngsters can decide for themselves lesser than Dutch peers, but this does not imply anything about the relation with parents. Youngsters experience a distance in the relation with their parents only when they do not longer accept the authority of parents. Moroccan boys accept parental authority lesser when they are at the beginning of the adolescent period, they start to revolt. When they grow older, this becomes lesser. All of them mention a close relation to their parents that seems to be contradiction to the amount of time that they are outside of the house. This can be a consequence of the cultural code of collectivism: one is supposed to have a close relation with parents, so one believes or wants others to believe that this close relation is existing. Compared with boys, Moroccan girls do revolt later in adolescence and the relation with their parents gets worse when there are more conflicts. The reason why girls revolt later in adolescence is that conflicts come forth from decisions about going to school, having relations with boys, getting married. For boys, conflicts are about trying out the rules and accepting authority.

#### SHEET 5

Pels (1998) found the following characteristics in Moroccan families:

- Mothers value continuity in parenting as important: they want to transfer traditions, habits and culture. But there are differences: mothers often had poor education and little opportunities and wish for their daughters a better education and more opportunities.

- Social success is valued high: good results in school, finding a good job and being successful in society. Social conformity is also valued as important: children have to obey and be respectful.
- Religious and moral goals are important: girls have to be prudent; boys should only mingle with 'good people' and should not shame their parents by hanging around in malls.
- Moroccan mothers value social autonomy low.

Pels also found that boys have much more freedom than girls, but have also less sympathy concerning emancipation for girls. Concerning parenting styles it was found by Pels (1994) that Moroccan parents value methods as talking with children and answering questions as not important. Rewards or giving compliments are little used in Moroccan parenting too: children should just behave and if they do not, they are being punished. When children are nagging or crying, candy is given as a way to keep them quiet but not as a reward for positive behaviour. The result of this is that children often are not proud of their accomplishments and do not draw the attention of adults of their accomplishments. The most used methods of Moroccan parents are: imitation, directions, commands and prohibitions. Mothers discourage unwished behaviour by first warn the child, and then threaten with punishment. The final threatening is that it will be told to the father. Also they threaten with monsters, evil spirits, and sending back the child to Morocco or burning in hell. Traditional disciplinarian methods such as mocking and making fun of the child are used too. Physical punishment or locking the child up in his room is also means to correct a child, with as a last resort a temporary stay of the child in Morocco. Parents experience the taboo on physical punishment in Western cultures and an intervention by professionals or institutions as intrusive and have the opinion that their most important correction methods is taken away without being given appropriate alternatives. This makes them fall back to powerless passivity that creates a lacune in authority that is being misused by children. (If you hit me, I will tell the police)

## SHEET 6

Van Niekerk (2000) researched differences between Surinam people with a Creole and an Indian background. The idea was that Indian people do better in society and have more social mobility than Creoles who are often unemployed. Van Niekerk has not found this. Concerning parenting it was found that parents from both groups value it as important that their children have more educational opportunities in Western countries, compared to Surinam. Indian parents are stricter and have a collectivistic culture with a strict hierarchy and gender-differences. Creole parents are less strict, allow their children more to go outside the house and give their children more individual freedom. The Creole

culture is a mixed culture with influences of African and Western cultures. Therefore, this is a less closed ethnic group with lesser social cohesion. Indians have a more closed culture and foreigners are accepted lesser into Indian culture. Parents want to prevent their children of becoming too much as Western children.

#### SHEET 7

Chao (1994) investigated parenting styles of Chinese parents. This is very different from the aforementioned parenting styles and has a strong emphasis on educational competence and knowledge. Chinese parents have an authoritarian parenting style in which they control their children very much. Mothers spend a lot of their time to the 'training' of their child, and children experience this as caring. Children of whom the mother spends lesser time into training do feel themselves abandoned. The research of Chao shows clearly that the concept of 'authority' is very different in Western people and Chinese people. In western countries it is perceived as negative but in Chinese culture it is an expression of love.

#### SHEET 8

We have seen that parenting styles are different in other cultures. Ideas of parents about disability are different too. In Asian cultures there is a stigma on disability and it is related to accusable mistakes. Wathum-Ocama & Rose (2002) questioned how parents from the Hmong-culture (Vietnam, Laos) and who live in the USA think about their deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The Hmong-people used to live as small, self-providing farmers, quite isolated from the majority of the society and isolated from cities and schools. In this research it was found that parents consider health problems as the cause of deafness, and not stigmatising causes such as misbehaviour in the family or blasphemy. This is a more positive point of view in parenting, as one would expect that parents are then more willing to enlarge the opportunities of the child. However, teachers report regularly that parents are not cooperative, such as in the use of hearing aids by the children. Parents mention that they are sad because of the deafness of their child, but that they accept the child unconditionally and that they have a good relation with the child. Teachers mention that children do not want to be seen with hearing aids, and children themselves mention that they are ashamed of their hearing aids. Concerning education both parents and children respond that this is important, but parents find it difficult to express goals in education, as they do not know what the possibilities in education are. Also it is mentioned by parents that they do not expect their child to be as successful as hearing children in education. Teachers confirm this, they do see low

expectances in parents, and they conceive deafness as a very serious handicap and relate it to learning problems and serious difficulty in gaining results in education.

#### SHEET 9

Nelson & Allison (2000) researched why Aboriginal parents make little use of special education, especially for children with learning difficulties and a low self-reflection. It was found that parents value survival (literary) as more important: finding food, invest in social relations by travelling to and from family members. They value regular education less important. They have an intuitive parenting style in which they respond to daily situations and learning opportunities and have lesser eye for long-term-goals.

#### SHEET 10

##### **Adolescents and cultures.**

Vollebergh (1996) considers ethnicity as one of the criteria in the construction of social categorisation. The more a group is being seen as alien, the more this group will be treated as an out-group with a negative attitude towards that group. In the Netherlands, Turkish and Moroccan people are found in the lower ranks of the ethnic hierarchy and children from these groups are being refused by children from other groups most. Ethnic distance in friendships is another factor: the preference for friends from the own group is mostly found in Surinam and Caribbean children. However, children from different ethnic minorities do feel themselves a part of a bigger ethnic diverse group, opposite to the group of Western children. This group feeling is not defined by sharing the same culture or sharing the experience of being different from Western (in this case: Dutch) culture but by a shared feeling of discrimination and having lesser opportunities. Remarkably is the intention to limit oneself to people from the own group found most in native children: the Dutch children. There has not been done much research to psychological well-being in children from ethnic minorities but results so far show that this is less good compared to Western children and that it is caused by discrimination, alienation and less opportunities.

#### SHEET 11

De Waal (1993) shows that ethnicity has an important role in the construction of peergroups. Mixed peergroups from different ethnicities are often found in specific areas as in these areas there is already a concentration of certain groups as well as in schools

in these areas. In The Netherlands these schools are labelled as 'black schools'. Native and non-native children do seldom mix, apart from these specific areas where native people with low social-economic status live next to people from ethnic minorities. Girls have an extra problem: as they are allowed to leave the house much lesser it is harder for them to establish friendships with Western girls.

#### SHEET 12

Forster and Kinuthia (2003) analysed the construction of identity in deaf youngsters from ethnic minorities in the USA: Afro-American, Asian American and Latin American. They found no big differences but did find a big similarity. All adolescents felt themselves to be deaf in the first place, and secondly member of an ethnic minority. One of the causes of this are of course the communication problems that these adolescents experience inside their ethnic group and because of which they are more excluded from the group, and less information about the culture of the group is transferred to them. They feel themselves related more to white deaf people than to hearing people from their own minority. Adolescents with Usher syndrome (the combination of deafness and blindness by Retinitis Pigmentosa) firstly try to find other deaf adolescents with Usher, secondly choose the companion of deaf adolescents (preferably with the same ethnic background) and thirdly seek company of people from the own ethnic minority. This is called a 'nested identity': the identity consists of several layers/aspects that are nested in each other.

#### SHEET 13

To summarize: psychological well-being is lower in adolescents from ethnic minorities. For deaf adolescents this is an addition to a lower well-being resulting from communication problems. Concerning peer group it is found that adolescents from ethnic minorities and native adolescents seldom mix. In special education however, we see a very mixed group of native children and children from ethnic minorities and children from different social-economic classes as schools for special education are often not near the homes of the children. Contradicting to hearing peers we find that deaf and hard-of-hearing children mix more with children from ethnic minorities and that for them the binding factor is found in being deaf, not in ethnicity.

#### SHEET 14

**Cross-cultural?**

Hofstede (1998) analysed differences in cultures, such as: individualism - collectivism, authoritarian - egalitarian orientation, gender differences, moralism - rationalism and masculinity - femininity.

#### SHEET 15

An example is the difference in masculinity – femininity: The Netherlands is ranked number 51 of 53 countries for masculinity, and Arab countries are ranked on 23rd place. The most masculine country is Japan. The UK is number 9, Germany 10 and the USA number 15.

#### SHEET 16

One would think Arab countries to be more masculine, but masculine means: appreciation of material success, status, respect, money and materials. Men should be assertive, ambitious and tough while women should be soft and caring. There is a preference of strong, decisive people with impressive bodies. On TV and in other media lots of sex and violence is being found. The position of a woman is thus not indicative of the masculinity of a culture when one compares a Japanese Woman to a woman in Afghanistan: number 1 in masculinity against number 23.

#### SHEET 17

##### **Cultural policies?**

In The Netherlands there is since the 80's a policy in education concerning culture and ethnicity. Pels (1993) found that culture is often seen as a problem or the opposite: being neglected. Guidelines for a policy concerning cultures are founding values such as freedom, responsibility, solidarity and tolerance. But there are different interpretations and concept concerning these values in different cultures as we see in the research of Hofstede.

#### SHEET 18

Human behaviour is not only defined by culture but also experiences influences from ecological, social-economic and psychological factors and genetic disposition. For pupils in deaf education this means that we have to look into the kind of disability of a child and its consequences plus the ethnicity of the child and the position of this ethnicity in society

(psychological); the influence of education and socialization inside the deaf school plus the parenting styles and socialization in the culture of the parents (ecological). A once more complicating factor is the lacking relation between the school and the parents, due to the little knowledge of special (Western) education in parents. Pels points out that the little knowledge of ethnic minorities in schools and the attitude of teachers plays an important role too. It is her conclusion that there should be more attention to intercultural communication in schools.

#### SHEET 19

There are no ready-made solutions for intercultural problems. Even worse, because of the events in America, Spain and recently in London there is less tolerance for multiculturalism and a tendency to overgeneralise. Ethnocentrism, the tendency to overtly value the own culture over other cultures is prevailing. If we want to develop an intercultural pedagogy we cannot start from our own values in parenting and education as being the best values. We do have to start a dialogue with parents from ethnic minorities and exchange, as well as explore, ideas about parenting and education. This means we have to drop the thought: "If they are more like us, then they (and we) have lesser problems". This thought is ethically unacceptable.

#### SHEET 20

If we want to create an intercultural expertise, we are being confronted with another problem. Dean (2004) discussed the myth of intercultural expertise and doubts it that one can ever have a full knowledge and understanding of other cultures. She suggests a model in which one remains conscious of the lack of expertise, instead of presuming that one can build up expertise. The client has the expertise and the professional must seek for knowledge and try to understand how issues are seen through the eyes of the client. Modern definitions of culture that are often used are such as: "ideas, habits, competences, artefacts of a people or group that are being transferred to new generations" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1988). Or: "Organised activities, based on communal ideas and definitions" (Becker, 1986). These are static definitions that make us believe that we can gather knowledge about other cultures.

#### SHEET 21

Post-modern definitions of culture are different, here we see culture as being constructed by the individual and the society: "Culture is always defined by context and manifest and

develops itself in an improvising manner. It transforms and is politically laden, it is moreover a matter of linguistics and language competence, of discourse" (Laird, 1998). This definition is more useful for the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing children from ethnic minorities as they face different problems than the hearing peers of their own group. They have different life-experiences and a culture of their own that comes forth from their different manner of communication. However, they are not the same as native deaf and hard-of-hearing peers as they are confronted with experiences that result from their ethnicity. We should thus continuously consider the experiences of each individual deaf or hard-of-hearing child from an ethnic minority. Important in this is that the professional reflects on the stereotypes and prejudices that he or she has about distinguished ethnic minorities. We also have to take in account the changing character of ethnic cultures, especially in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generations.

## SHEET 22

Shadid (2003) gives useful guidelines for professionals who seriously want to develop an intercultural perspective, such as:

### **Components of intercultural competence;**

The model of Spitzberg:

1. Individual level: personal competences such as motivation, knowledge and capacities.
2. Communicative level: communicative status of each person, impressions that one has of each other's communicative competence and social status.
3. Relational level: common competences, respect for each other's need of autonomy and privacy.

## SHEET 23

In order to have an effective communication with people from other cultures one has to be aware of one's own communicative style, the context of the interaction and the difference in power between oneself and the communication-partner. Gudykunst and Kim (in Shadid) consider persons who can successfully communicate with people from other cultures as persons who do not take their own or the other culture as point of origin but have a **third perspective**. These people are defined as:

1. Open-minded to new ideas and experiences
2. Being able to place themselves in the positions of people from other cultures
3. See differences and similarities between the own and the other culture

4. Have a tendency to describe behaviour that they do not understand instead of judging it
5. Are non-critical observers of the own behaviour and that of others
6. Capable to establish meaningful relations with people from other cultures
7. Less ethnocentric

SHEET 24

### **Recommendations**

In the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing children there should be more awareness of differences in parenting and education between cultures. Especially where it concerns communication we should take in account that cultures can have very different communication styles. For instance: in Caribbean cultures it is certainly not common to communicate with children. In Asian cultures such as in China mothers train their children and do thus communicate a lot with them, but eye contact is not common in Asian cultures. So if a Western professional is confronted with a Caribbean family, his or her recommendation to communicate a lot with the deaf child will not be understood. Nor will it be understood when it is told to an Asian family to constantly show one's face to a deaf child. It is thus necessary to establish an open discourse with parents from ethnic minorities, to exchange ideas and opinions concerning parenting and education with the goal to create an environment for the deaf or hard-of-hearing child in which all the relevant factors for its identity are taken in account: deafness, culture, ethnicity, religion.

SHEET 25

### **Food for thought**

(Silent, to read by audience)

Plurality is the condition of human action,  
Because we are all the same, that is, human,  
In such a way that nobody is ever the same  
As anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1989, p.8)

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