Chapter 22

Conflicitive Memory and Heritage Education in the Initial Training of Primary Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study shows that the professional competence of trainee teachers improves when social aptitudes are accepted as a key dimension guiding their training and the education of their pupils within the social sciences field. In the initial phase of the training of several cohorts of students of primary teaching degrees in Spain, work has been carried out on uncomfortable pasts, discovering hidden memories in everyday places. Taking this to be both a civic and educational problem, a process was begun to integrate emotion and critical rationality and to give meaning to the students’ educational experience both at university and, later, in the primary classroom. Here, results are presented in relation to the impact on trainee teachers of a training method incorporating conflicitive memory, heritage education and emotional education. Secondly, the results of transferring this training to the primary classroom during periods of teaching practice in schools are shown.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is a continuation of previous research (Domínguez-Almansa & López-Facal, 2016, 2017; Domínguez-Almansa & Riveiro-Rodríguez, 2017). Via the analysis of a significantly larger group of participants than in the afore-mentioned studies, the objective is to verify and establish how the assumption of a civic, critical and active conscience concerning issues which generate social controversy improves the professional competence of trainee primary teachers. This is the case both in terms of their capacity to reflect on whether their teaching is appropriate and to elaborate proposals which are coherent with this thinking, as well as their ability to apply it in the real context of the classroom, in their teaching practice with primary schoolchildren.

The historical memory surrounding the extreme political violence perpetrated in Spain within the context of the 1936 coup d’état, the Civil War and the beginning of the prolonged Francoist dictatorship is an extremely controversial issue (Aguilar, Balcells & Cebolla-Boado, 2011; Aguilar & Ferrandiz, 2016; Gassiot & Steadman, 2008). According to the data published by the ARMH (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory) (114,266 legally documented cases), Spain is the second country in the world, after Cambodia, with the highest number of enforced disappearances, victims of the Francoist genocide. The hegemonic civil and educational approach to this issue since the end of the dictatorship to the present day has gone from oblivion to an equidistance which ends up equating victims and perpetrators (Aguilar, 2008). However, in broad sectors of today’s society, there is an awareness that past wounds have not been healed and that the existence of thousands of mass graves, in which lie the history and memory of an uncomfortable past, implies a significant democratic deficit, an attack against human rights (Ferrandiz, 2010; United Nations, 2014). Therefore, it is impossible to consolidate necessary values and attitudes, via a history education focused on the knowledge of human suffering (Cuesta, 2014, 2015; López-Facal, 2016), in times when the ghosts of the past are reappearing with renewed totalitarian verve.

For its part, this educational experiment is integrated in the perspective of heritage education (Domínguez-Almansa & López-Facal, 2017) via a form of intangible heritage (memory) which attempts to re-signify groups or places which have long remained invisible or have been hidden. Based on this civic conception of heritage (Cuenca, Estepa & Martín, 2017; Lucas, 2017), the aim is to open up processes of heritage appropriation in the classroom, linked with processes of the construction and consolidation of identities in favour of a democracy with greater human quality in that social responsibility is assumed with those who suffer injustices or exclusion.

This research encompasses several cohorts of students studying the third year of a degree in primary education teacher training (Teacher Training Faculty, USC-Campus Lugo). It is attempted to demonstrate the capacity of trainee teachers to develop their professional competence by dealing with a controversial issue such as historical memory by way of reflection and teaching proposals, associating it with the field of heritage education. These perspectives must be transferred to the primary classroom in order to prove their capacity to progress from theory to real practice.

Our specific objectives are that: a) the trainee teachers evaluate the sense of historical knowledge and the methods for dealing with more significative learning, integrating memories and places, emotion and reason; b) they question their representations of heritage and the Spanish Civil War and reflect on the need to investigate their surroundings and open up heritagisation processes; c) they acquire social and civic competences by carrying out work on controversial topics; d) they understand collaborative work as an essential part of their teacher training and develop civic and cognitive competences among their primary pupils.
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