The Expansion Of Whiteness In Educational Practices: A Global Perspective

S.Ximena Bonilla Medina¹,²
¹University of East London, London, UK, ²Distrital FJC University, Bogota, Colombia

Whiteness is a racial social construct that has been claimed as an issue worth examining because it might certainly cause discriminatory social practices for people embodying a skin colour other than white (see e.g. ladson-Bilings & Gilborn, 2006). Whiteness is a racial social construct that has gone beyond the naturalistic explanation of skin difference (Omi & Winant, 1993). It is commonly asserted on the work of all of several researchers that whiteness affects people's perception of their reality so that they acquire a kind of blindness which does not allow them to explain the way the world is socially organised (Ladson-Billings & Gilborn 2006; Barks, 2002; Telles & Flores, 2013 and Koopman, 2012). As a consequence, discrimination and racism becomes a naturalised practice (King, 1991). Today with the transnational need derived with the heyday of globalisation and the dissemination of technology, it appears that whiteness has spread around the globe in different ways and education seems to be a significant means to develop its expansion growing everywhere in the world and accommodating to conditions of context and situated practices (Leonardo, 2002). In the struggle to find a place in the globalised world, education in particular countries has dealt with new problems derived from such transformation. In this way, I argue that educational practices at all levels, almost inevitably, take the role of reproducer of dominant discourses and stereotyped images of culture which slyly portrait a superior race. This presentation aims at raising awareness of those race dominant discourses as prevalent in educational practices at macro-meso and micro levels and their world-wide growth with the globalisation phenomenon (Apple, 1996; Whitty et al, 1998 in Ladson-Bilings & Gilborn, 2006). Based on the approximations of whiteness and education (see e.g. Ladson-Billings & Gilborn, 2006, Sleeter, 2003) and a revision done by Leonardo (2002) on global whiteness, this presentation aims at widening awareness on the prevalent discourses of whiteness in education at the mentioned levels and their silent growth along with globalisation. In order to develop that idea, I first define the concept of whiteness and how it might involve discriminatory discourses in educational practices. Second, I centre the discussion on the intertwined relationship between whiteness and globalisation and I state that educational practices are criss-crossed with whiteness discourse at macro, micro and meso levels. This debate is illustrated with some examples taken from studies carried out done in Colombia, USA and the UK.