CRITICAL HERMENEUTIC THEORY AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE AS REGARDS INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

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This research project has been driven by an agenda of change to foster a pedagogy of recognition, whereby students are regarded as ‘resourceful peers’ (Moehrke and Perselli, forthcoming) from whom everyone can learn. Critical pedagogy warrants the theoretical positioning of the project, which is situated within a distinct political context of curriculum internationalisation, that is, a private sector college in London. The project aims to explore the lived experiences of intercultural learning among international students and staff, and is in the final stage of analysis. The research setting is characterised by neoliberal practices and discourse (such as income generation, the marketisation of education and an ever-changing immigration policy which ‘otherizes’ international students as ‘bogus’). Critical pedagogy, which seeks to unveil and address forms of power in educational settings (Giroux, 2010), has thus been put to work to examine instances of (mis)recognition with regard to the students’ and staff’s lived experiences of intercultural learning. This is expected to alert participants and policy-makers to ways of change towards greater social justice within this context.

In the project, critical pedagogy could however not simply be ‘applied’ to pursue this change agenda; and hermeneutic phenomenology was used to support the study of lived experiences methodologically (van Manen, 1997). The construct of the bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001; Steinberg, 2012) enabled this dynamic relationship between critical pedagogy and hermeneutic phenomenology, and allowed for an active research practice in which two competing theories interconnect to promote change. Consequently, a theory seeking and developing process unfolded, which has led to a practice-based understanding of intercultural learning. In this symposium, I will illustrate this process and discuss opportunities for change as these have become apparent through the driver of critical hermeneutic theory.

References
Moehrke, D. and Perselli, V. (Forthcoming) ‘The time for recognising intercultural learning has come’.