

How can we educate intercultural citizens when the children are afraid?

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How can we educate intercultural citizens when the children are afraid?

Introduction

The notion of 'intercultural citizenship' has been proposed by Byram (2014, 2003) to engage with a situation in which an increasing number of people are raised as 'biculturals', connecting with multiple communities which can be located in different corners of the world. To Byram interculturality denotes 'dialogue', citing the 2008 definition provided by the Council for Europe (2014, 86). Building on ideas of intercultural dialogue and competence development, Byram suggests that one revisits more traditional, nation-oriented forms of citizenship education, adding an intercultural dimension to core competences such as social responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy (Byram 2014, 91-92). For a definition of what 'intercultural citizenship' can involve, Byram cites the Norwegian R Stavehagen (2008, 176):

[T]he idea of intercultural citizenship points to the building of political and social institutions by which culturally diverse communities within a multiethnic and multilingual nation can solve their differences democratically by consensus without tearing apart the common structures and values or having to abandon their particular identities, such as language, culture and ethnicity.

The vision of nation states educating for intercultural citizenship is very much present in contemporary formal and nonformal education. Originally disseminated through material sponsored by the Council of Europe, Byram's ideas have been adopted locally and globally by policy-makers as diverse as the Aalborg Municipality Schools Department (*Vild med Verden*, 2016) and the World Organisation for Scout Movements (*Dialogue for Peace* 2017). However, as noted by Alison Phipps (2014), the notion of Intercultural Dialogue was developed in contexts that were "stable, open and equal". Phipps continues: "it is at best limited and at worst dangerous when used in situations of conflict and aggression and under the creeping conditions of precarity which mark the present form of globalisation" (2014, 108).

This paper attempts to answer Phipps' challenge by examining how we, as researchers in intercultural communication and learning, can engage in a more activist way with the societal

developments and debates that are currently shaping the way young people perceive intercultural relations and identities. Around Western Europe politicians, national media, community leaders and intellectuals partake in a heated debate on terrorism, societal divisions and 'clashes of civilisations', and such 'discourses of fear' are overheard and quite possibly reproduced by many members of our societies, including children. A critical incident drew the author's attention to our need as researchers to engage in conversation with actors who in their capacity as school teachers, scout leaders and spokespersons for youth associations can support children's development of competences in the area of intercultural relationship-building and learning. Critical incidents, I shall argue, move scholars into the 'no comfort zone' where one cannot avoid engaging emotionally with the conflicts and turbulence that seem symptomatic of our time. Finally, the paper offers an example of how the author has attempted to take action, using a position as volunteer within the Danish Scout and Guide Association to involve leaders in the design of activities dedicated to intercultural competence development. The format is experimental, building on the 'Learning by Doing' principle that is central to the Guide and Scout educational method.

A critical incident

The critical incident motivating the action presented in this paper occurred during an international scout camp, held in Western Jutland in July 2016. On the morning of July 14th we learnt of the Nice terrorist attack and to pay respect to the French scouts present at camp all participants gathered in the morning for one minute of silence. Returning to camp, we overheard how our 10 to 12 year-old scouts were talking about terror and Muslims, relying on a language reminiscent of the 'discourses of fear' that one finds on Danish news sites or social media in response to such episodes. As leaders we felt an urge to respond to the scouts' talk and consequently sat our young people around the campfire, asking how they felt about the news from France. Gradually, we changed the focus from the terrible event that had happened in France to the common values and promise connecting us all as members of the global movement that is scouting and guiding. I remember telling the story of Lemine, my friend from Mauritania, who is Muslim and male, and who had invited me for tea and dialogue when I passed his camp at the World Scout Jamboree. Reflecting on the campfire talk, a girl retorted: "*But what can I do?*" Arguably, she here presents

what is perhaps the key challenge to intercultural educators in a world of conflict. For young people rely on us to provide an alternative to the 'discourses of fear' that have become part of their everyday reality; they require examples of concrete action that they can take in order to gain the sense that they are making a difference, working towards a world of global solidarity and understanding. In this specific case, I remember answering: "You can be a good scout", referring her to the seven guiding principles that all scouts will know as the Scout Law. But her question stayed with me and is my main motivation for writing this paper.

Researchers in the No-Comfort Zone

The image of researchers in the no-comfort zone emerged from concrete experiences that highlighted to the present author the limitations of academic debates. These experiences include my presence at a scout seminar in Paris on the night of the terrorist attacks, Nov. 13th 2015, as well as the challenges we faced when trying to arrange a visit by Zimbabwean scouts to the Danish national jamboree of 2017. What such episodes made clear to me was that our theoretical discussions of stereotypes, Othering, cultural differences and/or similarities offer little support to people affected physically and/or emotionally by intercultural conflicts within their school, community or city. Fine that we, as scholars, seek to challenge the representation of religion, ethnicity or national cultures in primary school books, as indeed was the focal point of several papers presented at the 2016 NIC conference in Bergen. But how does this help the school teacher, who is looking for pedagogic practices that can facilitate a conversation about multiculturalism in a class that has just read in the news about terrorism in Paris or London?

The idea that researchers are ethically obliged to act in order to create positive change within their local, national and global communities is inspired partly by the concept of global citizenship (e.g. Schattle 2009), partly by authors such as O'Regan and MacDonald (2007), who question the way intercultural communication is currently conceptualised and represented in academic discourse. A key influence is Alison Phipps, who in 2014 called for a 're-politicisation' of intercultural education (2014). Phipps offers the following reflection on being an interculturalist in times of trouble:

The experiences of precarity, of persecution and of violence and mass surveillance all have the effect of also rendering mute and voiceless. . . . They, therefore, also take us academics into places of advocacy, speaking with and even, of necessity for, places of problematic, messy contexts of dialogue, politics, engagement and dispute. These are contexts where certainly my regular experience has been of having nothing to say that is of immediate relief (Phipps 2014, 122)

Phipps argues for a more activist stance on intercultural education, stressing how we as researchers increasingly face situations where one can no longer ignore the politics that prevent communities from meeting and interacting in a peaceful manner. What I take from Phipps is her insistence that we, as interculturalists, start taking action. The value of our theory-building should be tested on the real-life events and conflicts that are currently shaping our communities' perception of the social reality; if we cannot offer hope to the child who has grown up in a world of terrorism and Islamophobia, we have failed as an academic discipline.

The second theoretical perspective to have inspired my thinking is Megan Boler, who originally coined the term 'pedagogy of discomfort' for her 1999 work *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*. I was introduced to Boler's concept through Sheila Trahar (2017), a researcher on international education, who found herself in a 'difficult situation', accepting an invitation to collaborate with Israeli universities in spite of strong personal sympathies for the struggle of Palestinian Arabs. Trahar's reflections confirm my earlier assumption that some international and intercultural educators will choose to become more actively involved with political and ethical questions as a result of critical incidents that shake our self-understanding as researchers and teachers who can make a difference solely through the pursuit of 'good' scholarship. For a definition of 'pedagogy of discomfort', Trahar cites Boler's collaborator Michaelos Zembylas:

A pedagogy of discomfort . . . is grounded upon the idea that discomforting feelings are valuable in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequality and thus create openings for individual and social

transformation. A major requirement, then, of pedagogy of discomfort is that students and teachers are invited to embrace their vulnerability and ambiguity of self and therefore their dependability on others. (Zembylas 2015; as quoted in Trahar 2017, 282)

Boler challenges us, as educators, to reflect on the normative beliefs that underpin our teaching of 'affirmative action' disciplines such as Gender Studies, Race Relations and, I would add, Intercultural Communication. According to Boler (1997) reading about social injustice, persecution and human suffering leaves us with a sense of 'passive empathy', which means that we may sympathise with the plights of 'Other' communities, but do so from the no-risk position of a privileged outsider. Boler has developed her ideas into a 'pedagogy of discomfort', underlining how: 1) educators must accept their responsibility for helping students deal with emotional responses to 'difficult situations' such as the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11; and 2) the space for pedagogic action will have to be inclusive of all voices, including those that challenge what we have come to accept as our personal and/or academic 'truths' (Zembylas/Boler 2002, Boler 2004 a). To illustrate, Boler (2004b) offers the example of a white, Anglo-Saxon middle-class male student, 'Sam', who in class claimed to be speaking as an 'American', responding with anger to the stories of discrimination presented in a Black Studies class. Boler explains how 'Sam's speech brought her into the 'no-comfort' zone, provoking a strong emotional reaction that seemed incompatible with her self-understanding of the role as teacher. Boler's story highlights to what extent our established truths build on a containment within disciplinary silos such as Gender Studies, Black Studies, Postcolonialism or Intercultural/Inclusive Education. Such siloing causes us to neglect an important conversation with the people whom we see as 'strange' because they question our belief about race and gender relations. But, as Boler (2004b, 130-31) concludes: "Humility is in part the ability to listen to others as we forge connections and the courage to recognize our perspectives and vision are partial and striving and must remain open to change." In other words, if we seek truly transformative learning, we have to move into the no-comfort zone where nothing can be taken for granted and we need to question our own ideologies and practices.

By bringing together Alison Phipps and Megan Boler we get an approach to intercultural education that demands action in spaces that may seem uncomfortable because they challenge our established authority as scholars and university teachers. Personally, I chose to use my position as volunteer in an alternative educational space, the Danish Guide and Scout Association, to experiment with activities that may further young people's development of intercultural skills such as self/other awareness, active listening and questioning techniques. Arguably, I here work from the comfortable position of an experienced scout leader, benefitting from easy access to resources and networks within the Danish scout movement. Yet what I seek to do here is new, requesting that our gaze be turned inwards, inviting children between 8 and 13 to explore multiculturalism, as manifest within their local community. This is important because scouting and guiding have traditionally engaged mainly with similarities and differences at the international level, which means that our young people probably feel closer connected to scouts in Egypt than to children living in one of the so-called Danish 'ghettos'. A second challenge is the translation of theoretical knowledge into activities for children, not least when these have to comply with the principles of the Guide and Scout educational method.

Learning by Doing and the Guide & Scout Method

To engage with the nonformal education provided by guiding and scouting associations is an obvious choice for the researcher seeking an activist approach to intercultural learning. A core principle in the guide and scout movement is 'Learning by Doing', which partly evokes the concrete actions that young people take when building a shelter, venturing on hiking expeditions or organising a campfire performance, partly the philosophy underpinning John Dewey's pragmatist take on education. Dewey (2011, 78) reflects on the process involved when 'learning by doing':

The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. On the active hand, experience is trying – a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term experiment. On the passive, it

is undergoing. When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. (78)

Kolb (1984) has translated Dewey's philosophy into a cyclical model, which divides the process of experiential learning into four stages: *experience*, *observation*, *reflection* and *active experimentation*. Interestingly enough, Kolb's cycle has been used by Danish trainers to explain to scout leaders what more precisely a 'Learning by Doing' approach implies. Central is the understanding that learning begins either with a *concrete experience* or an *experiment*, which may stimulate new observations, reflexive thinking and possible theory-building in relation to a specific field of action. The difference between experience and experiment is the degree of control that the educator has over the process. An experience happens instantly, demanding spontaneous action that cannot be prepared, and one example is the campfire conversation that we organised as an immediate response to an event provoking fear and discomfort among the young people. In contrast, experiments are planned by educators who will seek to achieve a particular form of 'Learning by Doing' by preparing tasks that encourage learners to act and thereby gain experiences that can further reflexive thinking and growth within a particular area.

The educational method underpinning the global scouting and guiding movements acknowledge 'Learning by Doing' as a key element, defined by the Danish Guide and Scout Association as "We experiment and act so that we may gain new insights through experiences and reflection" (DDS 2017). The wording corresponds closely to the experimental approach mentioned previously, suggesting that we are dealing with activities that leaders prepare and control in order to secure a particular learning outcome. The Guide and Scout Method, as used in the Danish Guide and Scout Association (cf. DDS 2017), includes six additional elements:

- Law and promise (Danish: *spejderlov og løfte*)
- Patrols (*patruljer*)
- Societal involvement (*samfundsengagement*)

- Shared decision-making (*medindflydelse*)
- Outdoor activities (*friluftsliv*)
- Personal development (*personlig udvikling*)

The aim is for the scout educational method to be manifest in the *concrete activities* that guides and scouts undertake; the *method employed* by young people when solving problems, and *leadership* approach taken by adult volunteers. Programme material should incorporate all elements and will frequently use the format of the scout merit badge, which is a series of activities organised around a specific theme such as pioneering, orienteering or communication. 'Doing' intercultural education, when realised in the form of a scout merit badge, is significantly different from the experiential learning processes that can be staged in a university classroom (cf. Tange 2014 for examples), demanding that academic notions such as self/other awareness, openmindedness and active listening be transformed into games and action that can be performed by 8 to 12 year olds. The final section describes a process where, together with a group of dedicated scout leaders, the current author attempted to translate her ideological belief in intercultural education into activities targeting 8 to 12 year olds.

'Doing' interculturality in a scouting context

The idea that one might use the platform offered by the Danish Guide and Scout movement to further intercultural competence development has been with me for some time. Originally, I imagined that one could work with international settings such as the World Scout Jamboree, and indeed developed this thinking in the 2016 paper 'National stereotypes or cosmopolitanism? The 23rd World Scout Jamboree as a site for intercultural learning. Yet critical incidents such as my presence in Paris on the night of the terrorist attacks, 13 November 2015, prompted me to ask if it is right to work with international settings in times when the sources of intercultural conflict seem so much closer to home? In Denmark we have witnessed an increasingly polarised debate on 'clashes of civilisation', which, arguably, has affected young people, leaving some with the impression that parts of their home city or region are populated by cultural 'strangers' who threaten their sense of comfort and stability. In addition, the often very heated Danish debate

may have prevented young people from partaking in conversation with people perceived to be 'different', avoiding questions that seem 'risky' because they touch upon issues such as religious beliefs, ethnic identification, migrant experiences or cultural traditions. The 'intercultural encounters' project responds to such a condition in two ways: 1) It invites an active exploration of the varieties of multiculturalism found in the children's local community (e.g. at school, in the neighbourhood or within settings such as a refugee camp or Mosque); and 2) it encourages dialogue by highlighting the importance of remaining curious, asking questions and listening to other people's stories.

To support the transformation of such thinking into educational activities we formed a team of scout leaders actively involved with children between 8 and 12. Our work began with a discussion of intercultural communication, departing from the model originally developed by Iben Jensen (2003). However, rather than choose an obvious 'Other', in the form of an actor representing an 'alien' religious, ethnic or linguistic community, I tried to challenge preconceived notions of culture, asking my team mates to discuss intercultural communication in relation to perceived differences between members of two Danish scout associations (the 'blue' and 'green' scouts, as they are commonly known). Subsequently, we formulated learning objectives for the two merit badges. 'Kulturagent', a merit badge targeting the 10 to 12 year olds, aimed for the scouts to:

- Discover that we have more in common than things that divide us
- Realise that we are stronger together than when we stand alone
- Realise that we are all 'different'
- Discover that we all have culture; this is not something found overseas
- Learn to break down the invisible wall between 'Them' and 'Us'

To structure the learning process we worked from a model developed in relation to social entrepreneurship, taking young people through the four stages of *Exploration, Learn and plan, Action and Communicate*. The framework has been used in various international programmes promoting global citizenship education and aims to develop young people's capacity to take action on issues such as climate change, intercultural conflict and social inequality. In relation to the current project, we used the framework to provide a structure to the activities: First, we asked

scouts and guides to engage with multiculturalism, exploring the different types of ‘culture’ found locally, including perceptions tied to their identity as ‘Danish’. At the *learning & planning* stage the patrols would prepare for an intercultural encounter, which might involve entertaining invited guests at the scout HQ or a visit to an unfamiliar venue such as a shelter for the homeless, a club for migrant children or perhaps an old people’s home. The programme ended with a meeting dedicated to communication and reflection. Here the patrols would present their experiences in the form of a poster, a song or a theatre performance, thus sharing and discussing their experiences with ‘Culture’. An example of how we structured activities is Kulturagent, a merit badge targeting 10 to 12 year olds:

<i>Explore</i>	<i>Learn & plan</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Communication</i>
<p>Game: ‘in my home we are different because (similarities & differences)</p> <p>Activity: what food is typically Danish? (choose a trad. dish; where do ingredients come from?)</p> <p>Songs: patrols choose a ‘Danish’ song; what is ‘Danish’ about it? (reflection on ‘own’ culture)</p>	<p>Game: ‘den lille undulat’ – in different countries (stereotypes – America ‘big’ etc)</p> <p>Planning for visit</p> <p>1: a song to teach</p> <p>2: a story about us</p> <p>3: telling stories ‘the scout way’</p> <p>4: what would we like to know about them?</p> <p>5: anything we’d like to see or try?</p> <p>(self-representation, asking questions)</p> <p>Game: miming & guessing Danish traditions (self-awareness, ‘my’ identity)</p>	<p>A visit to ‘Tilst community group’</p> <p>Meeting planned by leaders, together with leaders from host community</p> <p>The meeting should provide the scouts and their hosts with an opportunity to explore, ask questions, share games, songs etc.</p> <p>(Scout leaders here respond to invitation from Tilst youth group, who seek a partnership with local scout units to introduce scouting in a mixed community)</p>	<p>Game: where does the food come from? (‘treasure hunt’ with pictures of food/other items)</p> <p>Activity: the patrols discuss what they have learnt; afterwards they plan a presentation or performance, based on their exploration of culture (reflection: what did we learn?)</p> <p>Presentations: the scouts present + discuss their experiences (campfire – to round off)</p>

The 'Learning by Doing' element is manifest in various ways: First, the scouts are requested to select what they consider 'Danish' songs or food. This involves concrete action in the form of singing or cooking, but also the expectation that patrols can motivate their choice, which opens up a discussion of what more precisely 'being Danish' involves. Second, the patrols are asked to prepare for the intercultural encounter, choosing how they want to present their 'culture' (which may be defined in multiple ways, depending on whether they visit a different youth association, an ethnic community group or perhaps the local horse riding society). The meeting itself takes the form of a staged intercultural encounter, where participants share games, stories and traditions, thereby developing their capacity to ask and respond to questions about 'culture'. The scouts complete the programme by engaging in a process of reflective learning, which is translated into action through their creation of a poster or theatrical performance.

To illustrate how an abstract notion such as intercultural competence can be transformed into action, we may look at two tasks given to the 8 to 10 year olds. At the first meeting, *Explore*, we suggested that the children play the game 'indenfor/udenfor', which literally translates as 'inside/outside':

All children, but one, stand in circle, which can be marked by a piece of rope. The single person stands outside the circle and will need to change places with one of the insiders. The leader calls out characteristics that some children will possess, e.g. *blue eyes*. All children possessing the trait 'named' will now have to move to another place. This enables the 'outsider' to steal a place from one of the other children.

Note to leaders: traits can relate to appearance (e.g. eye colour), dress (e.g. scout uniform, cap), family (e.g. siblings) etc. Traits can include cultural identity markers such as religion, first language, country of birth, if the leader finds that the children are comfortable playing the game.

Inside/outside plays with theories on ingroup/outgroup formation, highlighting how our sense of being a cultural 'insider' or 'outsider' depend on the criteria used to define identities. If the scouts seem comfortable playing inside/outside, the leaders can develop the game by using cultural identity markers such as religion, ethnicity and first language. This will highlight to the scout to

what extent multiculturalism is present in their local scout unit, embodied by children who may be born outside Denmark, speak languages other than Danish, or express a sense of belonging to particular ethnic and/or religious communities.

A second activity, 'interviewing', works with the scouts' questioning/listening techniques, thus enabling them to prepare for the dialogue that they will be expected to partake in with the cultural 'strangers' invited to visit their HQ:

The activity takes place at the second meeting, *Learn and plan*. As part of their exploration of culture the children have prepared a poster or performance, providing an answer to the question *who am I?* The children now present to their patrol, who are encouraged to ask questions about the things they are told or shown. Subsequently, all patrols sit down by the campfire to discuss two questions: 1) what does it mean to be 'curious', and 2) what is a 'good question'?

The activity introduces interviewing in a form inspired by the 'Learning by Doing' principle, allowing the children to try out the skills of asking questions and listening so they have concrete experiences that they may bring to the joint discussion. The activity and subsequent reflection may address the problem of 'risk' in intercultural communication, underlining to the children how it is possible to ask questions in a respectful manner and thereby acquire a new understanding of other people's traditions and preferences. In the staged intercultural encounter the children are offered an opportunity to test their questioning techniques on invited 'strangers' (who, we recommend, should be adults willing to engage in a very open conversation about 'culture').

Learning from Doing – the researcher's reflections

The past sections have describe action taken in response to a critical incident that to me highlighted why we, as researchers and educators, need to engage more directly with the intercultural conflicts of our time. So far, many have approached this from the comfortable, theoretical position of an academic, taking for granted our right to criticise any teacher or youth club assistant, who in their eagerness to facilitate cross-cultural understanding have designed teaching material that represents diversity in what seems to us generalising and,

oh horror, functionalist in its conception of culture. But how many of us have actually stepped down from the Ivory Tower and supported school teachers, scout leaders and youth club managers in their development of teaching materials? My experiment with the 'intercultural encounters' project was an attempt to do just that, and, although this is very much work in progress the process so far has taught me two very important things:

First, I have no control over events. What we produced was a proposed structure that would take the scouts through the four stages of explore, learn/plan, act and communicate. For each meeting we described 3-4 activities and games, but these are mere suggestions and used by scout leaders for inspiration rather than as a ready-made plan. From the feedback received we know, for instance, that some leaders will adapt the activities to an outdoors setting such as a local forest or park. Others report that parts of the programme proved too 'school-like' for their boys and have added some 'wild' games. For a university teacher, who is accustomed to being in charge of course curricula and contents, working with intercultural education in this flexible, unplanned manner was interesting, although I sometimes speculate if the 'action' launched will always match the learning objectives that we defined initially.

Second, the experiment has prompted me to reflect on my dual roles as disciplinary authority and scout leader. In my own unit I have seen how the leaders work with the material and also how they adjust it in ways that may challenge my beliefs about 'right' and more 'problematic' ways of teaching intercultural communication. A concrete example was a session on greetings and politeness around the world, which to me produced somewhat stereotypical stories of French kisses and Chinese blurbs. Initially, I responded, pointing out that we had to be careful about generalising about other people. Subsequently, I reflected on this urge to intervene, feeling, perhaps, that this had been provoked by a desire to establish my position as a disciplinary authority. What I observed was that it had inspired the 10 to 12 year olds and their leader to an open exchange about different forms of 'Culture', and this is important, given our aim to stimulate a sense of curiosity and exploration.

But what can I do? That was the question posed by the 11 year-old scout in 2016. Did we manage to provide an answer? No and Yes. No, because the programme material offers no suggestions for direct action that a young person can undertake in order to prevent the 'discourses of fear' that currently leave young people with a perception that communities are divided by Culture. Yes, because we added to the Guide and Scout programme activities that invite leaders to engage with intercultural competence development in a structured way, using a 'Learning by Doing' approach to develop skills such as self/other awareness, cultural identification, communication and intercultural relationship-building. Once they have been awarded their merit badges as *Kulturspejdere* and *Kulturagenter*, our young people have experienced various forms of Intercultural Dialogue. This is important foundation knowledge for those who subsequently seek to engage in global citizenship education, e.g. through the international programmes offered by organisations such as Youth for Understanding, The UN Youth Association, the World Organisation of Scout Movements, and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

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