

Can library use enhance intercultural education?

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This article explores the questions to what extent educational research addresses library use in education and how the library can contribute to intercultural education. The focus is primarily on elementary education in Europe. Analysis of research publications was based on searches for peer-reviewed journals in international databases, literary reviews and empirical studies.

The findings indicate that research on library use and library resources is under-researched in educational research, including intercultural educational research. Research publications on educational use of library resources are found primarily within 'Library and information science'. The review and empirical studies indicate that education based on the use of library resources can help realise important aims of intercultural education. That includes provision of non-segregated education, development of reading engagement and literacy achievement among first *and* second language learners that exceeds that within traditional literacy programmes, multilingual development, integration of information literacy in content learning, empowerment of students as competent library users, and intercultural education based on diverse content learning within arts, social sciences and natural sciences. However, teachers and principals need to collaborate with librarians to realise these aims. Further educational studies are needed to explore the potential of library use to enhance intercultural education in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

What do we know about the use of library resources within education? To what extent does educational research and intercultural educational research, in particular, address teaching and learning based on the use of library resources? Can library use enhance intercultural education? These are the research questions addressed in this article. The focus is primarily on research and educational practice related to elementary education based on the use of library resources. I address these questions against a background of the considerable challenges faced by European schools in relation to providing qualifications for students regardless of social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The European Commission undertook a consultation (a Green Paper) in 2008, the results of which were released in a report at the end of 2009. The key issues were:

- closing the achievement gap between migrant children and their peers
- accommodating increasing numbers of pupils with different mother tongues and cultural perspectives
- developing intercultural skills among children and young people in schools
- adapting teaching skills and building bridges with migrant families and communities
- preventing schools from becoming segregated
- improving equity in education (Jaurena 2010).

Intercultural educational research explores these topics. The focus is on developing culturally sensitive teaching and teacher education, fostering educational reform that integrates cultural diversity and internationalisation into the curriculum, and moving beyond cultural diversity towards social justice in education (Gundara 2000a; Gundara & Portera 2008; Jaurena 2010; Schoorman & Bogoth 2010; Pihl 2009a; Pihl 2009b). However, although intercultural education has been on the political and research agenda in the EU in the past 30 years, implementation of intercultural education within particular nation states is far from complete (Gundara 2000b; Gundara & Portera 2008). Systematic differences in literacy persist, depending on the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds (OECD 2010). Segregated educational provisions for students from minority backgrounds are a serious problem (Beratan 2008; Harry & Clinger 2006; Dyson and Gallannaugh 2008) and provide challenges for educational research to identify and explore strategies for the complete achievement of educational aims. A theoretical assumption underlying the research questions in this article is that teaching based on the use of library resources has unrecognised potential for contributing to the realisation of intercultural educational aims. This idea is explored in the following text.

Methodology

To what extent does educational research and intercultural educational research, in particular, address teaching and learning based on library resources? This question was addressed by searching for publications in international databases and for literary reviews of publications addressing education based on library resources. A successful search of databases requires definition of the search terms. Two concepts are relevant to the research questions: 'library' and 'learning resource centre.' A library is a place in which literary, musical, artistic or reference materials (such as books, manuscripts, recordings or films) are kept for use but not for sale. Computers are generally integrated into libraries today. To what extent traditional school libraries have computers and other audio-visual media depends on priorities at government and school levels, and resources available at specific schools. For some years the concept 'learning resource centre' (LRC) has been in use. An LRC is a library, usually in an educational institution, that includes and encourages the use of audio-visual aids and other special materials for learning in addition to books and periodicals. Teaching of information literacy is at present associated with both school libraries and LRCs.

To complete this study, I searched for publications in the Educational Research Database for Pedagogy and Psychology (ERIC) to identify the quantity of publications that address the topics 'library' or 'learning resource centre'. Initially no limits were defined in relation to this search, and the initial results included all publications, not only refereed publications. A targeted data search was subsequently limited to refereed publications in academic journals. All searches were related to elementary education, alternatively primary education/primary school. Searches were limited to the following concepts: school library, learning resource centre, library resources, literacy, information literacy and intercultural education. No limits were defined with respect to the year of publication. Thus, all available publications in refereed academic journals that included these concepts in the ERIC database are included in the following

overview. The ERIC database registers publications on the basis of concepts that researchers use in titles, abstracts and articles in academic journals. If researchers used other concepts when writing about library use in education, the publications fell outside the targeted search conducted in this study, and further investigation is needed to complement this investigation. However, I suggest that it is likely that the concepts I chose for searching the databases were present in many if not most publications on the use of library resources in elementary education. Thus, because the concepts are registered in ERIC, I consider that the results of the data search indicate the priority that educational research accords to education based on library resources. Searches were also conducted in Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts. The following analysis focuses mainly on the results of searches in the ERIC educational database. Analysis of the second research question is based on literature reviews and empirical studies of literacy education based on library resources, with a particular focus on literature-based literacy education. The focus is primarily on studies conducted in Europe.

To what extent does educational research address library use in education?

The search in ERIC shows that although 'library' and 'learning resource centre' are used in publications in peer-reviewed academic journals, the library concept predominates at all educational levels. There are few publications on library and LRCs at primary school level. More publications address secondary education, but there are still relatively few publications. The number of publications increases significantly at college and university level. One interpretation relates to the lower importance attached to the use of library resources at primary school level compared with higher levels of education.

Table 1: Publications in the ERIC database based on searches of educational level and library, or educational level and learning resource centre as of 20 December 2012

Educational level	Publications on <i>library</i>	Publications on <i>learning resource centre</i>
Primary school	243	28
Secondary school	1429	352
College	12,530	992
University	14,397	661

Based on the search criteria specified above (publications in refereed academic journals related to elementary education), altogether 30,537 publications concerned 'elementary education'. Within this context, only 89 publications addressed 'school library'. No refereed publications in academic journals registered in ERIC addressed 'intercultural education' and 'school library' as of 18 January 2012. No publications addressed 'intercultural education' and 'library resources'. Only 24 publications were on 'literacy education' and 'school library', and only seven publications were on 'literacy education' and 'learning resource centre.' The ERIC database included four publications

that combined 'teaching information literacy' and 'school library', and two publications that combined 'teaching information literacy' and 'learning resource centre.'

Table 2: Search concepts and publications in peer-reviewed journals registered in the ERIC database as of 21 January 2012

Search concepts in ERIC database	Publications
intercultural education and library resources	0
intercultural education and school library	0
intercultural education and learning resource centre	0
literacy education and school library	24
literacy education and learning resource centre	7
teaching information literacy and school library	4
teaching information literacy and learning resource centre	2

The results indicate that educational research addresses education based on the use of library resources to a very limited extent. By contrast, a search into the Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts database found 13,004 refereed academic articles on 'school library' and 699 publications on 'learning resource centre'. Altogether, 1172 publications concerned a combination of the concepts 'school library' and 'information literacy', and 317 publications concerned a combination of 'elementary education' and 'school library' as of 21 January 2012. The results indicate that publications on library use within education are found primarily within library and information science.

The results of the search of the ERIC database concur with other investigations of the importance attached to library use in education and educational research. Bergvall and Edholm (2000) conducted a literature review of studies of how factors and actors influence the integration of the library in teaching in Sweden, Canada and the USA. They found that teachers and school leaders are often uninformed about what the library can offer and the competence of the librarian. According to Bergvall and Edholm (2000), school leaders are crucial to determining whether the library is integrated into teaching. Another element that plays a decisive role is the nature of the pedagogical work, whether it stimulates investigation and collaborative learning. The attitudes and role of the teacher, and the attitudes and role of the librarian are also decisive to determining interprofessional collaboration.

Limberg (2003) reviewed the international literature on the pedagogical use of the school library. The review shows that there are surprisingly few studies with a particular focus on the role of the school library in the development of literacy among pupils and their reading of literature (Limberg, 2003). According to Limberg, the library has a particular potential for improving learning, but this potential is used only to a limited extent. Consistent with the findings of Bergvall and Edholm (2000), Limberg's review showed that the pedagogical use of the library depends on the pedagogy of the particular teacher or school, media resources at the school library, the

school library room, the librarian and the information system. These factors interact with the character of the pedagogical work, the assignments given to pupils, and the school and organisational culture. Interaction between these dimensions and systematic teacher–librarian collaboration enhances meaningful learning of high quality (Limberg, 2003). Rafste (2005) drew similar conclusions from a study of pedagogical use of the school library. She found that the typical pedagogical use of the school library is for homework. There is little systematic collaboration between teachers and librarians in relation to educational planning and the use of literature or other library resources in teaching and learning (Rafste, 2005). A study of the school libraries in Norway provides an example (Barstad et al., 2007). The study documented a clear division between primary and lower secondary schools, and upper secondary schools regarding the personnel resources available, competence of school library personnel and school library opening hours. At 80% of upper secondary schools, the person in charge of the library normally has the library as his/her only assignment. By contrast, only 18% of the primary and lower secondary schools employed one person whose sole assignment was to manage the library. The average allocation of personnel resources at primary and lower secondary schools is only 5.4 hours per week compared with an average of 29 hours per week at upper secondary schools (Barstad et al., 2007). A low priority for library use in elementary education has also been reported in other European countries (McCutcheon, 2010; Streatfield, Shaper, Markless, Rae-Scott, 2011). Education based on the use of resources in school libraries and LRCs is not generally prioritised in educational policy in terms of infrastructure, economic funding and curriculum guidelines. The relatively weak position of school libraries and LRCs in elementary education is reflected in the review of academic articles mentioned above. That is, there are few educational research publications related to the use of library resources in elementary education. The results indicated that this is also true for intercultural educational research.

Does library use enhance intercultural education?

The major objectives of intercultural education are to achieve successful qualification of students in the language of instruction regardless of their cultural and socioeconomic background or minority status, multilingual development, intercultural understanding and inclusive education. Literacy development is fundamental to realising these aims.

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society (UNESCO 2004, p. 13).

Literacy education in the language of instruction is a great challenge in schools with multilingual students. Research on the development of literacy emphasises the importance of the content of reading; that schools and students have access to a broad and varied body of authentic texts suitable for pupils with different interests and needs, and for pupils from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and different literacy contexts (Dressman 1997; Elley 1991, 1992; Gambrell 1996; Martin-Jones and Jones

2000). Research documents the importance for reading engagement of pupils being free to choose what they want to read (Donham 1998; Pihl 2011) and those with poor reading ability being offered meaningful texts. The importance of meaningful texts cannot be overestimated. This is important for all pupils and particularly in an intercultural context (Gundara 2000a; Nieto 2008). Children who are fascinated by what they read tend to become engaged readers, which is crucial to the development of literacy. PISA assessment of literacy shows that students who are engaged readers in their spare time but of low socio-economic status perform better than students of higher socio-economic status who are not engaged readers (Roe 2011).

In the following, I discuss education in different countries where teaching is based on giving students extensive access to literature and other library resources, and the potential contributions to intercultural education (Elley 1991, 1992; Morrow et al. 1997; Pihl 2011; van der Kooij and Pihl 2009). Elley (1991) reviewed 'book flooding' programmes in the language of instruction in nine countries and found that linguistic minority pupils in these programmes learned the second language better and more rapidly than did pupils who were taught the second language by traditional methods. By contrast, an international study conducted in 32 countries showed that reading many textbooks has no positive effect on the development of literacy (Elley, 1992).

In Sweden, a successful project was developed in an elementary school, in which teaching in all subjects except math was based on the reading of fiction. Interprofessional collaboration between librarians and teachers, and institutional collaboration between the public library and the school library were central to the project. The project was developed in a poor suburb at the outskirts of Stockholm with a predominantly immigrant population. The project class had 24 pupils from a bilingual or multilingual background. The following first languages were represented in the class: Turkish, Somali, Arabic, Tigrinya, Spanish, Farsi, Urdu, Bengali, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Thai and Serb. The educational approach was to develop literacy based on stimulation of joy of reading based on the reading of fiction and 'flooding the classroom' with books. The assumption was that reading and work involving quality fiction engages the whole child by involving intellectual and linguistic capacities, emotions, fantasy and empathy. Even more important, given the nature of fiction, reading contributes to the acquisition of cultural capital in a broad sense. The literature was in Swedish. At the same time, priority was given to provide parallel books in the mother tongue of the pupils. Based on extensive work with fiction in teaching and extensive collaboration between the school and the public library, and between the teacher and school librarian, at the end of the project, the pupils scored above average in comprehension of Swedish words, reading in Swedish and math. A key pedagogical focus in the project was on the content of reading, which was given priority over form (Axelsson, 2000).

A similar project was recently conducted in Norway (2007–2011). The aim of the research and development project was literature-based literacy education and use of the library as a learning arena (Pihl, 2011). The Multiplicity project involved collaboration between teachers, librarians and researchers, and between schools, school libraries and the public library. One participating elementary school had 75% of linguistic minority

students, and the other school had 11% linguistic minority students. The literacy project generated reading engagement and extensive use of the school library and public library among both first- and second-language learners (Pihl, 2009, 2011). The students became ardent users of library resources to fulfil personal and educational needs, in and out of school. About 75% of the pupils became engaged readers in the language of instruction, irrespective of their first language. At the school with 75% linguistic minority students, 90% used the public library branch once a week or more for reading, borrowing books and for social purposes after participating in the project. Essential to the project was provision for non-segregated literacy education (van der Kooij and Pihl, 2009), extensive access to library resources in both the language of instruction and minority languages, voluntary reading at school and integrated pedagogical work with literature and information literacy (Bueie & Pihl, 2012). The major findings were that interprofessional collaboration between teachers and librarians facilitated inclusive literacy education and information literacy, the latter of which was integrated into literacy education and content learning. Education based on use of library resources and interprofessional collaboration required a learning process among teachers, librarians and school principals. The study documented the educational benefits of literature-based education and library use in terms of reading engagement regardless of the students' linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds (Tonne & Pihl 2012), information literacy and inclusive education in an intercultural context. The project highlighted some important pedagogical preconditions for successful educational use of library resources in literacy education: collaborative teaching and school environments, support by institutional leaders, systematic collaboration between teachers and librarians related to planning and implementation, a well-developed and fully staffed school library, and collaboration between the school and public library. These factors are consistent with the findings of several other studies (Codispoti and Hickey, 2007; Kurttila-Matero, Huotari, & Kortelainen, 2010; Montiel-Overall, 2007; Rafste, 2005; Streatfield et al., 2011; Vaagan 2004; Virkus, 2003).

Discussion

The studies presented above suggest that the pedagogical use of library resources enhance intercultural education along several dimensions by encouraging the following:

- non-segregated educational programmes
- reading engagement in the language of instruction among first- and second-language learners that exceeds that obtained within traditional teaching and learning
- multilingual literacy development based on minority students' reading of literature in their first language
- information literacy integrated into content learning in school subjects
- empowerment of learners as library users to pursue individual and educational needs and purposes in and out of school
- student access to cultural capital based on intercultural teaching of diverse literature in the arts, social sciences and natural sciences.

However, such enhancements are related to changes in pedagogical priorities and professional and institutional development in schools. If students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students of colour or other minorities have poor educational achievements, theories of cultural deprivation tend to explain this with reference to family or ethnic background or the cognitive capacities of the individual child (Coleman, 1979; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). However, the results of studies of content learning based on fiction and other library resources from an intercultural perspective may undermine theories of cultural deprivation. Many of the projects described above found that in literacy programmes based on extensive use of library resources, disadvantaged students develop reading engagement and literacy to a level higher than that achieved in traditional educational programmes, a finding that contradicts theories of cultural deprivation. I propose that education based on the use of library resources may enhance the quality of teaching in classrooms with students from diverse backgrounds and may thus help achieve intercultural aims. To do so requires that the quality of teaching moves beyond teaching of basic literacy and information skills to development of cultural and information literacy. This may in turn reduce the digital divide between students who have and do not have access to cultural capital, computers and the Internet at home (Streatfield et al., 2011; Virkus, 2003).

Today, diversity in the student population is juxtaposed with standardised qualification requirements and competition. Teachers are held accountable for the performance of their students. At the same time, they are expected to meet the educational needs of all children through didactic measures, which include differentiating and adjusting the content to an individual child's needs (Ainscow 2004; Allan 2003; Flem & Keller 2000). However, it is almost impossible to differentiate and adjust teaching to meet the needs of individual children in a class with 25–30 pupils, especially when this is expected of teachers in every school subject. The textbook, which still has a strong position within teaching, only matches the qualifications and needs of some students in any given class. At this point, the library constitutes a potential resource for teaching because it can provide differentiated learning. Instead of the teacher making tremendous efforts to differentiate a given content defined by the textbook or the curriculum, the teacher can provide students with diversity in content reading and learning along several dimensions: language (multilingual literature), complexity, genres, topics, cultural perspectives etc. Library resources have the potential to meet the intellectual, emotional and artistic needs and interests of diverse students provided that the teachers and the pupils know how to make use of these resources. At this point, collaboration between teachers and librarians becomes vital, but studies indicate that one of the great challenges in schools is to develop systematic collaboration between teachers and librarians.

Dressman (1997, 291) criticised teaching based on 'tracked' reading in which pupils are denied access to texts beyond their supposed 'grade level' or 'reading level'. This routinely restricts students' reading to texts that are often of low literary quality and little interest to the students, which may not motivate the student toward further reading. The library resources represent an alternative by offering a wide range of authentic and interesting texts at all levels and in all genres. The idea that literacy development takes place through social interaction and engagement with texts that are

more complex than the supposed literacy level of the reader is substantiated by theories of language and literacy development and collaborative learning, notably those of Bakhtin (1986; 1981) and Vygotskyj (1962; 1978).

In many Western countries, poverty, social fragmentation and discrimination of immigrant minorities constitute social problems that undermine democratic participation. Young people, notably the white poor and immigrant minorities, struggle with experiences of exclusion and marginalisation (Balibar, 2003; 2007; Gundara, 2000a). Having access to information and knowledge is vital to democratic participation (Schilssler et al., 2005; Soysal, 1994). The school and public library provide access to both. These are invaluable assets, particularly to the poor, who otherwise may be excluded from access to information literacy, books, newspapers, music and other services.

Conclusion

This study indicates that education based on library resources is an under-researched topic within intercultural educational research. Empirical studies show that library use can enhance intercultural education. Use of library resources can help provide non-segregated education. Literacy education based on students' voluntary reading of fiction and work with other library resources can make significant contributions to reading engagement, acquisition of linguistic and cultural capital among first *and* second language learners and development of multilingual literacy and information literacy. Library use has a potential for empowering students to use libraries for educational, personal and social purposes on their own initiative in and out of school. These are important contributions to the realisation of educational aims within intercultural education.

However, studies show that successful teaching and learning based on library use depends on institutional and professional change. Schools would benefit of developing school libraries or learning resource centres which are responsive to a diverse student population and the students' use of the internet and other media. Teachers and school leaders need to learn how to integrate the use of library resources into teaching and learning at all levels. They need to learn how to collaborate with librarians. These are challenges to intercultural educational research as well as teacher education and educational policy.

Further educational studies are required in order to further explore the potential of library use to enhance intercultural education in the twenty-first century. Qualitative and quantitative studies are needed at national, European and international levels. Furthermore, studies of inter-professional collaboration between teachers and school librarians/media specialists are needed from an educational perspective. This may in turn influence educational policy, to the effect that education based on library use becomes fundamental within teacher education as well as primary and secondary education.

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