EPISTEMIC JUSTICE IN EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

Emerging ideas from the JustEd study

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WHY EPISTEMIC JUSTICE?

- It is a form of justice that relates to knowledge: to the possibility that individuals and communities have for accessing and for contributing to the creation of knowledge and the 'shaping social meanings' (Geuskens 2018).
- It is a fundamental aspect of justice in general.
  - Fricker (2007) : all other forms of injustice can only be addressed 'when those who are mistreated or who suffer injustice of a structural nature are **heard**… This requires that 'people enjoy some basic epistemic power' and that the concepts that they need 'to express themselves are available to them' (Geuskens 2018, 17)
- The possibility of knowing and of being recognized as knowers, as well as the possibility of participating in the construction of social meanings are thus essential elements of just societies
- Knowledge is 'the essence of education' (Kotzee 2013) and while schools can play a vital role in fostering epistemic justice they are often implicated in the institutional reproduction of epistemic INjustice
  - through curricula, textbooks and pedagogic styles; and in the way teachers understand the nature of knowledge and students' role in learning, and how this manifests in their teaching and classwork; as well as in the ways in which schools are organized to foster specific relations between their members that show learners how to negotiate epistemic power imbalances (or not).

FROM A NEGATIVE TO A POSITIVE DEFINITION OF EPISTEMIC JUSTICE

- Fricker defines - epistemic justice as injustice, proceeding inductively from specific cases that allow her to typify two main forms of epistemic injustice
  - Testimonial: not receiving due credence as a speaker because of a prejudice on the part of the hearer
  - Hermeneutical: not being able to make sense of one's own experience because the necessary hermeneutical [interpretive] resources are lacking
- Epistemic injustices are usually based on cultural difference, language, gender, race, age, social class, against the 'subaltern'(de Sousa 2020) who are invalidated as knowers and producers of meaning
- In the paper we proposed a different, more positive definition:
  - Epistemic justice as 'equality in the production, recognition and consumption of knowledge' which contributes to 'knowledge democracy' (Hall, Godrie & Heck 2020)
  - 'epistemic justice means that all human beings can contribute to the shaping of social meanings and that all putative sources of information are included, i.e. that all are able to influence what comes to pass as knowledge - whereby the criteria for the relative amount of authority someone has, to wield more influence than others, should be **epistemically as well as morally grounded**.' (Geuskens p. 17) - grounded on the knowledge itself, which can be assessed
- In the paper we explore various spheres of epistemic justice/injustice – gender and postcolonial struggles - and how educational settings may promote epistemic (in)justice: pedagogies, language, intercultural relationships, etc.

EPISTEMIC JUSTICE IN PERUVIAN EDUCATION

EPISTEMIC JUSTICE IN EDUCATION POLICIES, CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS

- **Research Question 1** - Policy analysis: focused on Intercultural and bilingual education policies + interviews with policy makers; remarkable achievements over the past 15 years, but with considerable setbacks in the last few years.
  - Intercultural and bilingual education have been on the agenda for over 30 years.
  - In 2011, a ministerial administration within a left-leaning government, provided the political space and resources needed to move forward. It introduced Intercultural and Bilingual Education policy and plan, and strategies for implementing IBE schools.
  - Since 2016, constant ministerial changes in the context of highly turbulent political period, followed by pandemic, has led to the waning of both the budget and the political push for IBE.
- **Research Question 2** - Analysis of textbooks and curricula included: intercultural education and gender; as well as proposed pedagogical orientation of curricula and texts: whether they promote active engagement with different concepts, deep or superficial understandings of different ideas and issues, and critical thinking.
  - The content we found in relation to epistemic justice: celebration of cultural diversity, lack of links to social exclusion and inequality; gender equality, critical of gender violence, absence of gender diversity; limited strategies to promote analytical and critical thinking

RESEARCH QUESTION 3 - EPISTEMIC JUSTICE IN SCHOOLS

- Methodology to address this form of justice was a challenge, especially in the context of the covid pandemic
- Sample of 4 public schools in 3 regions: Lima (coast), Ucayali (Amazon), Ayacucho (Andes). Participants: teachers (18), students (24), headteachers (4), key actors (10).
- Methodology: hybrid enquiry (part in presence / part virtual) with teachers and students from the two final years of secondary school.
- Participative and iterative approach:
  - sequence of individual and group encounters that allowed participants to engage and elaborate on ideas:
    - Students: (E1) Personal interview – (E2) group discussion – photovoice exercise – (E3) individual interview based on photovoice exercise– thinking about the future exercise - (E4) final group discussion.
    - Teachers: (E1) Personal interview – (E2) group discussion [Epistemic Justice] – (E3) group discussion [Transitional and Environmental justice] – class reconstructions sheet– (E4) final individual interview on class reconstruction.
  - From personal experience (life/family histories), to learning in and beyond schools, and to thinking about (just/unjust) futures

RESEARCH SITES

School 3, Ayacucho



School 1, San Juan de Lurigancho





School 1, San Juan de Lurigancho

School 3, Ayacucho





School 4, Ucayali



School 2 Huaycán



MATERIALS CREATED TO GENERATE DISCUSSION ABOUT JUSTICES



JUSTICIA EPISTÉMICA

Cuando hablamos de Justicia Epistémica nos referimos a la **equidad en la producción, reconocimiento y consumo de conocimiento.**

Nos hacemos preguntas como ¿qué grupos tienen acceso a conocimiento y quiénes no? ¿qué formas de conocimientos son excluidas o subvalorados? ¿qué grupos no tienen la posibilidad de divulgar o compartir sus conocimientos?

La **Justicia Epistémica** busca que las personas nos esforcemos por escuchar y no silenciar diferentes formas de conocimiento.



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EJEMPLO DE INJUSTICIA EPISTÉMICA

En muchos países el parto es acompañado por parteras. Por ejemplo, esto pasa en Inglaterra, Canadá, incluso en Perú. Las parteras son mujeres que acompañan a las futuras madres durante su proceso de embarazo y parto. Se sabe que su conocimiento viene de prácticas que se transmiten de generación en generación e, históricamente, muchas mujeres han acudido a ellas durante su proceso de embarazo. Por ejemplo, en países como Colombia el 30% de partos son realizados por parteras. De hecho, los investigadores en el tema han encontrado que las parteras conocen mucho sobre la anatomía de las mujeres y sobre sus necesidades durante el embarazo, parto y post-parto, además que su prácticas para ayudar a las mujeres a dar a luz ayudan a enfrentar la violencia obstétrica. Sin embargo, en algunos lugares, el conocimiento de las parteras no es reconocido como valioso o importante a pesar de sus aportes. La falta de reconocimiento de la labor y los conocimientos de las parteras, a pesar de haber sido tan importantes en la historia de varios países, es un ejemplo de cómo se puede llegar a la injusticia epistémica.

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¿QUÉ ES LA JUSTICIA?

La justicia es una acción que se ajusta a algún tipo de ley o regla socialmente aceptada, que busca que todos los miembros de un grupo humano reciban un tratamiento justo.

Las instituciones justas tienden a establecer un sentido de estabilidad, bienestar y satisfacción entre los miembros de una sociedad, mientras que aquellas acciones que se perciben como injustas pueden dar lugar a sentimientos de insatisfacción.

La justicia se puede aplicar de muchas formas que no siempre pasan por procesos legales. Además, puede involucrar cuestiones materiales, como retribuciones monetarias o castigos específicos, pero también involucra aspectos simbólicos y cambios culturales.

Las diferentes formas de la justicia pueden tener que ver también con ciertos ámbitos específicos de la actividad humana, como pueden ser los ámbitos del conocimiento, el medio ambiente o las situaciones posteriores a situaciones de conflicto y violencia.

PROYECTO JUSTICIA EDUCATIVA

1



OBJETIVO DEL PROYECTO:
El proyecto busca entender las experiencias de los estudiantes de secundaria con respecto a la **justicia epistémica, transicional y ambiental,** y los retos que enfrentan los docentes para enseñar estos temas en el espacio de la escuela.

JUSTICIA TRANSICIONAL



La **Justicia Transicional** se discute e implementa en países que han vivido períodos de violencia extrema como, por ejemplo, guerras civiles, conflictos internos o regímenes autoritarios.

Esta violencia implica la violación de derechos humanos de muchísimas personas.

La Justicia Transicional (que viene de "transición") son las formas que estos países usan para entender lo que pasó, reparar el daño generado por la violencia vivida y alcanzar la reconciliación y la paz.



Profesor/profesora, luego de leer estas definiciones… 8

Imagine, por favor, un ejemplo para cada forma de justicia: JUSTICIA EPISTÉMICA, JUSTICIA AMBIENTAL Y JUSTICIA TRANSICIONAL.

Anótelos para la siguiente vez que conversemos.

Puede pensar en algo que haya visto, escuchado o experimentado en el país, en su barrio o en algún colegio.



JUSTICIA AMBIENTAL

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Se refiere a la posibilidad que deberíamos tener **todas** las personas a acceder a recursos naturales como la tierra, el agua, y el bosque, y a vivir en un medio ambiente sano.

Desde este concepto nos preguntamos ¿quiénes en el país tienen acceso a los recursos naturales y quiénes no? ¿por qué existen estas diferencias entre algunos grupos y otros?

Hablamos también de considerar a la naturaleza como sujeto de derechos que deben ser respetados.

Ejemplo Justicia Ambiental

- Un ejemplo de injusticia ambiental es lo que ocurre con algunas zonas de la Amazonia peruana. Los ríos de Madre de Dios son los más contaminados del país. Estos ríos contienen arsénico, mercurio, plomo, cobre, níquel, entre otros, lo cual afecta sobretodo a las personas que viven cerca del río y que usan agua de él. Se ha encontrado que afecta sobretodo a comunidades indígenas, quienes tienen residuos de mercurio en su cuerpo. Se ha detectado que de cada 10 de los más afectados, 7 son de comunidades indígenas. También, muchos niños y niñas indígenas tienen residuos de mercurio en su cuerpo en más del límite aceptado. La contaminación también afecta a los animales que viven en el río (a los peces, a los cocodrilos) y también a los árboles y plantas cercanas. Algunos pece… están tan contaminados, que su consumo está prohibido.

- ¿Creen que este es un ejemplo de Injusticia Ambiental? ¿Por qué? ¿Qué cosas tendrían que cambiar para que sea un caso de Justicia Ambiental?
- ¿Quiénes son los afectados por esta injusticia? ¿Y la naturaleza?
- ¿Habían escuchado alguna vez de este caso? ¿Qué habían escuchado? ¿Dónde?



EPISTEMIC JUSTICE - STUDENTS

- Identify and are able to describe problematic issues (inequalities between men/women; ageism; discrimination agains culturally different)
- Recognise and value different cultures
- Are critical of gender differences between men/women (especially girls); less so gender diversity
- Reject racial, cultural, socioeconomic and gender-based forms of discrimination
- Are critical of few spaces in school to learn and discuss these matters
- Their knowledge/information is often acquired outside of school, through social media, which they approach rather uncritically









EPISTEMIC JUSTICE - STUDENTS

- Their knowledge is impressionistic: bits of information (not always correct); they confound ideas/terms
- Noticeable lack of capacity to articulate and connect ideas - not only those related to epistemic justice specifically
  - They do not link cultural diversity to inequality
  - When discussing transitional justice issues, they mentioned having knowledge about some "pieces of the puzzle", but felt they lacked a complete understanding both of what had happened in the country during the time of the internal armed conflict; they couldn't establish links between those causes and similar elements (inequality, injustice, discrimination, etc.), that are still present in the country today.
  - The fact that the internal armed conflict cannot be spoken of as a matter of epistemic (in)justice
  - When discussing environmental issues, there was a similarly limited understanding of the facts, and almost no capacity to analyse causes, consequences, more structural issues.
- Little or no analytical and critical thinking and no connections between the (in)justices
- But no lack of capacity and curiosity, and even some awareness about how little they know
- A feeling that they want to know more but have little opportunity for meaningful learning, especially in context of pandemic

EPISTEMIC JUSTICE - TEACHERS

- Established awareness about the importance of respect and valuing of diversity, especially cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge
- Limited, often cosmetic/celebratory engagement in schools with ideas/practices of intercultural education (similar to curriculum and textbooks)
- Some openness to equality between men/women but little openness to gender diversity
- Superficial dealing these matters with little analysis or and connection between issues
  - E.g. diversity and various forms of exclusion, inequality, power relations
- An emphasis on 'activities' and methodologies without much clarity about their aims
- Teachers expressed similar issues as students: little involvement in pre-service and in-service training for meaningful engagement in construction of knowledge and debates of ideas, perception that they receive instructions that they have to implement

EXPLAINING EPISTEMIC (IN)JUSTICE IN PERUVIAN SCHOOLS

- A very poor education system: years of underinvestment, poorly trained teachers, lack of consistency in policies and programmes; a poor decentralized administrative system; and very marked socio-economic school segregation / paired with a more recent move towards a competencies based pedagogical model that has undermined the knowledge basis of learning, and an overall technocratic approach to learning (as techniques to improve standardised test results), have undermined significant learning in schools.
- Past 30 years: some positive changes in teacher-pupil interactions (reduction in physical and verbal violence from teachers towards students), teachers' instructional practices are still lacking.
- But classroom practice is still mostly organized around curricular content that is dealt with in superficial ways; teachers 'active' ways of teaching consist of question-answer strategies that point towards a pre-specified and specific answer, rather than to generate ideas and promote thinking, and don't provide opportunities to analyze, create or criticize ideas (Gonzales, et al. p. 33)

KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING AS A MATTER OF JUSTICE

- Through the exploration of students and teachers knowledge and practices in relation to a series of issues relating to epistemic and other forms of justice we see that Peruvian students capacity to access knowledge, and for contributing to the creation of knowledge and the 'shaping social meanings' is severely limited
- The pandemic profoundly deepened epistemic injustice; access to knowledge is even more limited, and with less opportunities for active learning.
- Looking at this not only from the perspective of the population's skill basis, but as a matter of social and epistemic (in)justice might be a potent way of approaching the knowledge and learning debate