


Chapter 15

Equity in Inquiry: Challenging Epistemic Dominance Through Intercultural Pedagogy and Student Knowledge Production

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is a meta-research exercise that reflects on The Intercultural Individual study as a transformative space for epistemic justice in higher education. It challenges hierarchical knowledge by positioning students as co-analysts and the instructor as a reflexive participant, fostering participatory inquiry. Grounded in narrative inquiry and critical intercultural pedagogies, it highlights how student-generated knowledge disrupts academic norms. The study amplifies marginalized voices and embraces diverse ways of knowing. It reassesses theoretical and methodological dimensions and emphasizes students' role in meaning-making beyond researcher-subject dynamics. A Manifesto for Equity in Inquiry calls for decolonizing knowledge, embracing multilingualism, and recognizing alternative epistemologies. It urges dismantling epistemic hierarchies and centering student knowledge in academic inquiry. Ultimately, this chapter advocates for a fundamental shift in research validation, fostering a more just, inclusive, and reflexive academic landscape.

15.1 OPENING WORDS AND FOUNDATIONAL REFLECTIONS ON EQUITY AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

In recent decades, intercultural research has emerged as a crucial field for addressing the complexities of local interconnectedness (Roudometof, 2015). This expansion reflects the growing recognition of the need to navigate cultural diversity, foster mutual understanding, and confront systemic inequities in knowledge production (John & Rempala, 2024). However, the methodologies and frameworks prevalent in this field often remain entrenched in the epistemic dominance of Western-centric paradigms, widely perpetuated in higher education (HE) (Kerr, 2014). These paradigms frequently marginalize localized and Indigenous knowledge systems, reinforcing a homogenized perception of valuable knowledge. This

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marginalization manifests in Eurocentric discourses shaping research content and objectives, limited representation of historically excluded cultures in academic scholarship, and the lack of culturally responsive pedagogies that engage diverse epistemologies in HE. Such practices constrain the richness of alternative knowledge systems and risk reinforcing cultural misunderstandings and deepening educational inequities (Zalli, 2024).

Addressing these imbalances requires integrating a broader spectrum of perspectives, including those rooted in non-dominant traditions, into research and education. Scholars emphasize the importance of decolonizing research methodologies and incorporating culturally relevant pedagogies. For instance, Patel (2016) critiques Euro-Western educational systems and advocates for research driven by Indigenous worldviews that challenge traditional Western paradigms in knowledge production. Similarly, Gay (2018) underscores culturally responsive teaching that connects students' cultural backgrounds to academic knowledge, enriching educational practices and fostering inclusivity. These approaches highlight the necessity of embracing diverse epistemologies to create a more equitable academic environment. Thus, the validation and integration of non-dominant knowledge systems scaffolds academia move beyond tokenistic inclusion toward genuine epistemic justice (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga & Flores Carmona, 2012). Furthermore, such an environment enhances scholarship's depth and relevance while empowering historically marginalized communities to contribute meaningfully to the global knowledge landscape.

This chapter presents a meta-research reflection exercise that examines students' engagement in knowledge construction within the framework of Critical Intercultural Pedagogy (CIP) and epistemic plurality. Students assume an ongoing role as co-analyst and active participants in (Self-)inquiry, reinforcing the transformative potential of integrating diverse epistemologies into HE (Timmis et al., 2024). A reflexive analysis of the ways in which students' voices challenge and reshape traditional research paradigms underscores the importance of fostering inclusive and participatory teaching, learning, and research environments as an inseparable triad. At the core of this process is the argument that knowledge production should not only acknowledge student agency but also actively center their voices in academic discourse (Caetano, Freire, & Machado, 2020).

Eventually, this meta-research reflection advances the broader pursuit of epistemic justice in HE. Validating alternative ways of knowing and resisting hierarchical structures that perpetuate marginalization in both the classroom and academia contributes to this goal. Moreover, the role of the teacher-researcher extends beyond instruction. It requires empowering learners as critical intercultural inquirers, who recognize themselves as valid interlocutors in academic spaces and critically examine the epistemological tensions that shape their intellectual landscapes.

15.2 CENTRAL ARGUMENT

This chapter presents a twofold central argument. First, in HE, teaching and classroom research are increasingly recognized as complementary and equitable processes shared between teachers and students. The classroom functions as a decentralized intercultural Third Space, particularly from the perspective of epistemic plurality. Based on Gutiérrez and Johnson (2017), and Ngeh (2022), the Third Space can be defined as an expansive, interventionist, and transformative learning environment where learners actively engage in knowledge production while critically examining and addressing power structures. It serves as a dynamic pedagogical arena that fosters participation, reflection, and transformation, positioning students as central agents in their learning processes. Beyond facilitating intercultural dialogue,

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