

## GETTING TO THE ROOT-MEANING OF DIVERSITY WITH RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND DECONSTRUCTIONISM

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Let me if you please open with a statement from my teacher Sunnie D. Kidd, “Without theory we would not have the vision to bring about that which is possible.”<sup>1</sup>

There are two theories that provide a sound base for diversity. Both theories uncover the problematic and give direction as to how to overcome our present dilemma in education and society.

First we need to look at the metaphysical, epistemological and axiological assumptions of each theory. This way we will directly get at the root-meaning of the theories.

The metaphysics of reconstructionism tells us that there are both ideal and practical uses of any view. The epistemological tells us that learning comes through social interaction and the cultural fabric in which we exist. The axiological tells us that we need to make life better than it was or is.

The metaphysics of deconstructionism tells us that there are many views but no one completely represents all views. The epistemological tells us that learning comes through language and cultural texts. The axiological tells us that we need to uncover the regimes of truth.

The metaphysical is the ontological view of being or the nature of the human being that tells us how the theory views the human being. The epistemological tells us how the human being learns and obtains knowledge. The axiological tells us how the human being comes to values.

We will begin with reconstructionism that tells us society is in need of constant reconstruction or change. Social change involves both reconstruction of education and the use of education in reconstructing society.

Reconstructionists although somewhat pragmatic feel that pragmatism lacks an active view to solve the current problematic. Pragmatists take the view that school and society must act cooperatively. Reconstructionists take the view that our immediate needs are so great that education must take the initiative in correcting social ills.

Reconstructionists want to implement solutions to the social problematic. Educators must seek an active social and political role for education. Educators must view education as more than schooling alone.

Reconstructionists are international in their outlook. They believe that we must take a global perspective with problematics such as pollution, overpopulation and hunger. Reconstructionists basically take a universal view in overcoming the problematic.

Teachers must engage students in issues and help them study ways to combat these problematics. To be effective a lot of education should occur outside of the classroom and in the wider society. A society of the future should be a vital part of all curricula.

Basically the view of reconstructionists is that society is facing a crisis of survival and that school occupies an important position as a foundation for action. The primary struggle is between those who want to preserve society as it is and those who want change, to make society more responsive to individual and social needs.

The reconstructionist view requires educators who are willing to explore new possibilities through action and who are able to envision alternatives. This demands that schools be freed from stifling traditions in order to change society.

Today's schools promote too much competition and this tends to isolate and separate schools from society and individuals from one another. We need a call for unity rather than fragmentation. Reconstructionists want to implement in school and society a world community.

Now we will turn to deconstructionism. Postmodernists (Deconstructionists) are concerned with irony, contingency and popular culture, variety, difference and deconstruction.

Deconstructionists see a crisis in contemporary culture and hold that no single cultural tradition will suffice to meet it. The curricular canons of Western cultural traditions, scientific laws or first principles are viewed as forms of continuing domination.

Deconstructionists promote knowledge about cultures on the margins and discourses around gender, race, ethnicity and class identities. They explore how notions of truth have their origins in historical conflict and struggle, how these notions exercise power over institutions, social systems and personal identities.

This assumes that social politics and movements come together in historical events to send us in certain directions rather than others. Rather than seeking universal causal forces in history, educators should look for the regimes of truth that exercise power and control over people and institutions.

Deconstructionists basically take a particular view in overcoming the problematic.

Deconstructionism is critical of Western logocentrism that assumes that what appears to the intellect is representative of the world. Intellectual representations belong not to logos, the organizing rational principle of the world, but to human discourses, writing or texts.

We need to deconstruct our texts and examine how the vagaries of language confuse meanings because we are never fully in control of the language we use. Language cannot be exactly precise and the assumption that mind precedes language is a mistake. What we call mind comes from our cultural texts and how we interpret them.

Deconstructionists aims of education stresses ethical relations among people, including people of different background, origin and perspective. A basic aim is to engage students in critical discourses on human exploitation and to emancipate them from oppression.

Education should result in self and social empowerment rather than serving the marketplace and economic competition. It connects educational processes, the means to the imperatives of community, the ends and beliefs that curriculum should empower people and transform society. Teachers are to be seen as transformative intellectuals occupying political and social roles.

### Concluding Remarks

Both theories provide a sound base for diversity. Both tell us that there is something wrong with society and the way to overcome the problematic we must turn to education. Turning toward education we find that it is perpetuating society. We must first change education that is resistant to change then we can change society. We must deconstruct education and reconstruct it then we can change society.

We have seen that in education no view represents all and that there are many views that are both ideal and practical. We have seen that learning comes through language and cultural texts, social interaction and the cultural fabric in which we exist. We have seen that we need to uncover the regimes of truth and make life better than it was or is. Both theories give us vision to bring about that which is possible.

### Notes

1) Sunnie D. Kidd, “*Inbetweenness: The Indivisible Whole*” *Superdirector.com* (1 August 2002). <http://superdirector.com/sunnie2.html>