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Dialogic Discourse as a Tool for Strengthening Identity and Cultural Belonging among Arab Female Students in a Teacher Training College

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Abstract

This study explores how dialogic discourse can enhance the sense of belonging and cultural identity among Arab-Bedouin female students in an early childhood education program at a multicultural teacher training college in southern Israel. Integrated into the course “Heritage and Holidays in Bedouin Society,” dialogic discourse served as a pedagogical tool to foster critical thinking, strengthen educational agency, and encourage reflection on personal and professional identity.

The research aimed to assess how dialogic discourse in the classroom reinforces cultural identity and belonging and supports the students’ ability to convey meaningful cultural content to young children. The findings reveal that active listening and open dialogue encouraged students to express personal views and rethink their cultural identity in a reflective manner. Despite these benefits, some students’ experienced internal conflict, struggling with the challenge of questioning traditions deeply rooted in Arab-Bedouin society. Concerns about maintaining respect and traditional hierarchies made these discussions complex.

Nevertheless, the process contributed to the students’ professional growth, deepening their understanding of their role as educators. It emphasized the importance of developing dialogic communication skills that balance cultural values with the need to adapt to changing social contexts.

The study concludes that promoting dialogic discourse in teacher education, especially in multicultural settings, is essential. This approach not only deepens self-awareness and cultural understanding but also empowers student teachers to become agents of meaningful educational and social change in their communities. These findings align with research on dialogic education (Alexander, 2020; Hennessy et al., 2020), highlighting its transformative potential.

Keywords: dialogic discourse, cultural identity, arab-bedouin female students, educational agency, multicultural teacher training