



Ritam Dutta

The Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A

## “Let’s Talk”: Promoting Dialogue and Answerability in Critical Humanities Education with Permeable Curriculum and an *Adda*-Based Pedagogy

### KEY WORDS

critical humanities education, permeable curriculum, answerability, dialogism, funds-of-knowledge, *Adda*-based pedagogy

### ABSTRACT

Dutta Ritam, “*Let’s Talk*”: *Promoting Dialogue and Answerability in Critical Humanities Education with Permeable Curriculum and an Adda-Based Pedagogy* [“*Porozmawiajmy*”: *zalety dialogu i odpowiedzi w programach edukacji humanistycznej opartej na zasadach pedagogiki adda*]. *Kultura – Społeczeństwo – Edukacja* nr 1(7), 2015, Poznań 2015, pp. 35–59, Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2944-5. ISSN 2300-0422

Building on Moje *et al* and Dyson’s work within a Bakhtinian framework of dialogism and ethics of answerability, the paper argues the need for a critical humanities educator to create dialogic learning spaces within classrooms that would be engaging for students and where students would be encouraged to draw from their various ‘funds of knowledge’ in order to connect their ‘school-world’ with their other social worlds. The paper points out the interconnected nature of our knowing-in-the-world and suggests that all teachers, but especially teachers of critical humanities or social sciences adopt an *adda*-based pedagogy through a permeable curriculum for promoting wholesome, student-centered learning in colleges and universities that would harness students’ various ‘funds of knowledge’ both in and outside classrooms. The paper argues that even though the use of *adda* in the classroom, like other similarly negotiated curricula, does generate some challenges for educators, yet the benefits of using an *adda*-based pedagogy in the classroom far out-weigh its disadvantages in the creation of a democratic, equitable and engaging learning environment in classrooms.

## Introduction

“...it seemed like there was an invisible separator between us. I couldn’t seem to reach out to them, much less fathom them. Everything – from the things they discussed in hushed tones to things that made them crack up hysterically – seemed strange and foreign to me. There was no connection – my jokes elicited not a single giggle...”

~ from my first-year teaching journal

Given the impersonal nature of most schools (Alim, 2011), teachers and students often feel disconnected from each other (Dyson, 1993) and this is particularly true for beginning teachers. As I re-read the entries from my first-year teaching journal, I remembered just how alienated I had felt when I started teaching three years ago, and as an international graduate student my lack of familiarity with American youth cultures in the Northeastern university I taught in exacerbated the estrangement I felt from my students. Reflecting back, I realized that even as I felt estranged from my students, my students too must have felt similarly about me. “*There was no connection*” between me and the bunch of twenty-something-year olds, whose learning I was entrusted with. I completely failed to understand what motivated or bored them, what got them all sparkly-eyed with excitement and what elicited silent groans from them. I found myself wondering what it is that I was not getting?

Anne Haas Dyson (1993) writes that “this feeling of separation from and puzzling about the lives of children” (p. 1) is not all that uncommon, particularly in educational institutions that bring together students and teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds:

Indeed, research in schools serving children from diverse sociocultural backgrounds suggests that teachers and children often do feel disconnected, a feeling exacerbated by differences in race and class. (p. 1)

This is not just true for schools serving little children, but also, and perhaps more so, for colleges and universities where people – students and faculty members, administrative and support staff – come together from diverse race and class backgrounds, and also represent a great diversity in terms of ethnicity, nationality, language, culture, traditions, ideologies, political, religious and disciplinary affiliations, values, beliefs, thoughts, physical abilities and life-experiences. In short, colleges and universities are mixing grounds for diverse worldviews, particularly in a country like the United States that has increasingly become an international hub of higher education.

However, despite this rich diversity and much effort to acknowledge this diversity, most of it goes unnoticed. In fact in most cases, we don’t even get to know a person any more than what we see of him or her in the classroom and in the hallways. Anne Haas Dyson (1993) points out that while children simultaneously inhabit several social worlds, we, educators, only get to see a tiny side of them in the classrooms. In colleges and universities, where teachers perhaps spend only a couple of hours every week with their students in classes that are not organized by grade-years, and are often on the higher side of fifty or more in strength, our chances of really getting to know our students are even slimmer.

Moreover, a much greater strength and a less localized student population in big colleges and universities, unlike in many grade schools, increase the possibilities of disconnect and alienation – and not just between teachers and students, but also among students too as there are fewer things in common between them.

Alienation heightens the sense of difference in people, and can often also exacerbate hostility and intolerance. It is, therefore, important to actively strive to connect these diverse worlds of students and teachers if we care about creating inclusive, tolerant and compassionate learning spaces in the classrooms of our institutions of higher education, and, by extension, prepare young minds for the creation of a similarly just and tolerant society. However, it is also important that in our zeal for bridging the gap, we don’t gloss over the differences. Difference is an essential reality of human existence, and more harm could be caused by attempting to shove it under the carpet than by engaging with human differences in an ethical way.

Several scholars have either implicitly suggested or explicitly argued in favor of engaging with the diverse social worlds of students (Dyson, 1993; Moje *et al*, 2004; Moje *et al*, n.d.; Moll *et al*, 1992; Sidorkin, 2004). Anne Haas Dyson points out the necessity of attending to students’ worlds, but she also points out the need for educators to help students attend to (and, if possible, enter) each other’s as well as the teacher’s social worlds, while building connections between the different social worlds that they each inhabit: “we must also help children expand and negotiate among the sociocultural worlds – the dialogues – in which they participate (Dyson, 1993: 7). Dyson illustrates how this was achieved through oral storytelling and written compositions in the permeable kindergarten/first-grade classroom of Eugenie (a student) in the East San Francisco Bay Area that she studied. I shall argue the case for creating a similar engaging and dialogic learning space in critical humanities education using *adda* – a Bengali cultural practice of informal, social, peer-talk at hangouts – as a form of pedagogy within a permeable curriculum. But before that, let me turn to some scholars who have similarly stressed the importance of connecting the different social worlds of youths.

## Funds of knowledge

Building on Moll *et al*’s (1992; 2005) concept of ‘funds of knowledge,’ Moje *et al* (n.d.; 2004) argue that all of us carry multiple funds of knowledge with us from the multiple social worlds that we simultaneously inhabit. In negotiating our day-to-day life-world, we selectively draw from these multiple funds of knowl-

edge as per the demands of the situation, the time and the place. Thus in asking a girl out and in participating in a class debate we draw from different (but not necessarily mutually exclusive or incompatible) funds of knowledge, even though Moje *et al* (n.d.) might point out that the two seemingly disparate acts for the most part require much of the same set of skills – namely, being persuasive. Moje *et al* (n.d.) also point out that the multiple funds of knowledge that students (and also teachers) bring to school jostle for space and recognition in the ‘school-world’ (Dyson, 1993) against the school’s official ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moje *et al*, n.d.).

These various ‘funds of knowledge’ are a part and parcel of both the students’ official ‘school-world’ and unofficial ‘peer-world’ (Dyson, 1993), and freely intermixing, these ‘funds of knowledge’ influence students’ ‘ways of taking’ (Heath, 1983; 2001) from the world or meaning-making both inside and outside the school. These different ‘funds of knowledge’ that students bring to school with them are already present in the classroom, even before the lecture begins; already given, so to speak, as students draw on them to make sense of school work, often re-interpreting school work in new ways in the process and infusing them with “unexpected social and cultural meanings” (Dyson, 1993: 6). Thus, what the teacher teaches or thinks she teaches, and wants the students to learn, might not be what students take from the lesson. When this gap between the teacher’s intent and student’s reinterpretation of that intent becomes apparent like when little Eugenie decided to focus her creative efforts on President Lincoln’s love life in her response instead of what her teacher had hoped for when she had asked her to represent a crucial part of Lincoln’s life pictorially, we see the teacher shaking her head in despair over the disconnect with her students (Dyson, 1993). In most cases, teachers’ primary coping mechanism when disconnect becomes evident is either to put the blame squarely on the student or to convince oneself that teaching is not for her (Conklin, 2008) – as I had almost convinced myself once.

However, not only is this *not* the student’s fault, nor an indication of his or her lack of interest or ability, it is perhaps, to some extent at least, also natural and inevitable. According to Bakhtin (1981; 1986), in absence of any common shared meaning, interlocutors must dialogically negotiate meanings of acts as unique acting agents from particular subject positions within the context of the particular act itself. In other words, as Bender (1998) points out, meaning is constructed “in the relationship of understanding [between the speaker and the addressee – real or imagined] from a particular perspective and the obligation of acting from that position;” and as such the truth or the meaning of any utterance is essentially partial, ever un-finalized and subjective (p. 189). Any meaning

making process, according to Bakhtin (1981), is essentially dialogic and must attempt to include both sides of the conversation. However, when Bakhtin speaks of dialogue, he means more than the actual act of conversation between interlocutors.

## Dialogism

According to Bakhtin, every utterance (even those utterances that are addressed to no one in particular or those that are thought of but never actually articulated) is dialogic in that it anticipates an addressee and can never be free from the influence of the anticipated response to the utterance. An utterance emerges from the desire to be answered; it is “not designated to dissipate in a vacuum” (Braxley, 2005: 13). Braxley (2005) explains that the response to an utterance, however, does not need to be immediate for the utterance to be dialogic; nor does the response (or, for that matter, the utterance itself) have to be oral or even verbal. The response could be “either in words or in action,” spoken or written and directed to the speaker or not, but there’s always a listener and “the listener will respond eventually” (p. 13). Therefore, meaning is always negotiated and, as Volosinov/Bakhtin (1973) write, “can only arise in interindividual territory.” (Volosinov/Bakhtin quoted in Dyson, 1993: 4). But, as pointed out above, dialogue should not be understood as a “mere verbal exchange” (Vitanova, 2005: 154) between two interlocutors. For Bakhtin, dialogue is that complex, socially embedded meaning making process in the world that “stresses interconnectedness and permeability of symbolic and physical boundaries” (Gardiner, 2000; cited in Vitanova, 2005: 154), and in which “the historical and the present come together in an utterance” (Hall, Vitanova, Marchenkova, 2005: 3), even in the absence of any actual, physical addressee. In Bakhtinian ontology then, dialogue is synonymous with “human action and life itself” (Vitanova, 2005: 154).

Dialogues are possible only in an unfinished world of meanings. If a word is known completely (which, according to Bakhtin, is an impossibility), when meaning is shared and fixed (like so many of us, teachers, want the meanings our words to be for our students!) and when there’s no longer any difference, the word ceases to be dialogic. In fact, according to Bakhtin/Voloshinov, if this indeed happens, the word would cease to exist. It makes the question, “what do you mean?” redundant, just as it makes the need for a response equally redundant. Such a state would be similar to the state of *Nirvana* in Buddhist philosophy or *Mokhsha* in Hindu philosophy – a state of perfect knowledge or enlightenment when the being ceases to exist, for there would be no further reason for

existence – because beings are forever unfinished, a work in progress; “to be” is synonymous to being incomplete, short of being perfect. According to Bakhtin/Voloshinov, “[o]ne voice alone concludes nothing and decides nothing – two voices is the minimum for life; the minimum for existence” (Bakhtin, 1984: 213). Fortunately or unfortunately however, most of us lesser mortals who worry about learning and education have not quite reached that state yet. Therefore, assuming difference and incompleteness of meanings, educators need to understand the ethics of answerability, if we indeed wish to understand the role of dialogues in our classrooms, and, by extension, in our lives.

## Answerability

Bakhtin’s notion of ‘answerability’ is embedded in dialogism. Vitanova (2005) explains that answerability “invokes the need of dialogues between selves who act to answer other’s action. In this sense, dialogue is perceived as a form of answering other’s concrete or generalized voices and thus their axiological positions” (p. 154). However, ‘generalized’ here implies an imagined other in absence of a concrete, physical other; it does not imply that the addressee of an utterance is replaceable by just anyone for in the absence of any shared meaning, every utterance or act must assume a unique acting agent and not just ‘anybody.’ Bakhtin argues that precisely because meaning cannot be shared with others, “the ‘ethical act’ is grounded in an awareness of difference” and is unique “within the act itself”; its truth cannot be accessible outside “the act itself,” in which “the unique self plays a crucial part” (Bender, 1998: 188). Bakhtin’s notion of participative thinking “emphasizes that I can only understand theoretical ideas and other people within specific actions that exist in relation to myself” (Bender, 1998: 188). Psychologist Jerome Bruner (1996) distinguishes between the explanatory and interpretive functions of the human brain in ‘understanding and explaining other minds,’ which Bruner sees as complementary but irreducible to each other:

The explanatory, aims to elucidate the necessary and/or sufficient conditions that enable us to recognize a mental state... [while] the interpretive way is after-the-fact and typically context-dependent, and therefore ‘historical’... in the latter case, one reasonable interpretation does not preclude others (p. 102).

It is in this heightened sense and realization of the non-replaceable self and other, and of the un-finalized uniqueness of our every single utterance or act among the multiplicity of possible utterances that we are born into the ethics of

‘answerability’ and ethical action. As I see it, it is precisely this realization that meaning is not given, that the meaning is what we *make of* any utterance or act we participate in that prompts us to ethical responsibility. Bender (1998) writes, “Bakhtin’s ethical self... participates in events from a particular position that is hers or his alone, and cannot be replaced with any other position or anyone else’s moral imperative”(p. 187). This implies that we have a crucial role and an obligatory responsibility in any meaning-making processes we participate in, and that the meaning that we actively construct is our very own and nobody else’s. Nor could meaning be explained causally, as it’s rooted in the domain of interpretation (Bruner, 1996). Further, even the meanings that we construct are unique and specific to the current context; it will invariably change in different time and place or for a different act. This realization places the responsibility of understanding and being understood by others on none other than us collectively. The answerable act for Bakhtin is “precisely that act which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgement of my obligative uniqueness” (Bakhtin, 1993: 42; also quoted in Bender, 1998: 190).

To negotiate the meaning of an utterance, however partial and incomplete our understanding of it might be, and to answer it, we need to understand the utterance or the act itself and the position of the speaker or her ‘accent’ in relation to the act or utterance. In other words, besides realizing the meaning of an act or utterance in relation to myself, I need to make a genuine effort to understand (even though such an understanding would be invariably limited and partial) the meaning of the act or utterance in relation to the speaker. Bakhtin (1986) emphasizes the role of the listener as an active respondent in the dialogic meaning-making process:

When the listener perceives and understands the meaning of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it, augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution and so on. (p. 68)

To extend the example of Eugenie, if one of our students chooses to focus on President Lincoln’s love life above everything else then there’s a reason why she does so and Bakhtinian ethics of answerability demands that we make a genuine effort not only to understand her reasons, but to answer them as well. Whether by agreeing or disagreeing, we need to augment the dialogue of the utterance by responding to her, by answering her and never should we shut her down by calling her response being not on task, which is usually the typical response of most teachers to those seemingly irrelevant comments sometimes made by their students during class-discussions.

This negotiation, this *a priori* anticipation of a response is only possible when one has a thorough grasp of the context. Context in a Bakhtinian sense implies more than just the time and place of the utterance (although it is that too). A grasp or knowledge of the context here would mean knowledge of the language, knowledge or an awareness of the multi-accentuality of meaning (Bakhtin, 1981; 1984), knowledge of the socio-cultural and historical connotation of particular words, knowledge of the addressee and his/her relation to the speaker, as well as the time and place of the utterance and any other relevant information that impinges on the meaning of the utterance. Bakhtin (1986) writes:

Any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree... he presupposes not only the existence of a language system, but also the existence of preceding utterances, his own and others' – with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another... Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances. (p. 69)

This “chain” extends both in temporal and spatial dimensions, as Braxley (2005) explains with the example of dialogism he sees in Bakhtin’s own body of works between the various academic disciplines he draws from: “the chain also stretches out to other fields, other genres, and other languages” (p. 13). In other words, multiple ‘funds of knowledge’ enter into a dialogue not just in Bakhtin’s works but whenever any of us speak.

Moreover, Bakhtin (1981) says the word is only half ours and half someone else’s – they are always already given to us infused with other people’s meaning and accent/intentionality; we don’t learn words from the dictionary, but from other people’s mouth (Bakhtin, 1981). Similarly, students learn from each other in different social contexts and draw from those funds of knowledge as necessary. Dyson (1993) points out that children’s language use is fraught with such relentless inter-textual citations: “They take words learned from others and use them to give voice to their own feelings and thoughts.” (p. 4).

Learning in our life-world is therefore inter-personal and inter-textual – it spans multiple contexts, multiple social worlds and draws from various funds of knowledge we already possess. Since learning involves meaning-making, it is also essentially dialogic and extends beyond the classroom-space both temporally and spatially. That is, it seeks to connect with the students’ present, past and possible (future) (Bruner, 1996) life-experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Significant learning, according to Fink’s taxonomy, includes several components besides ‘foundational knowledge,’ that is, understanding and remembering of information and ideas taught in classrooms. Some of the other components of Fink’s taxonomy of significant learning include ‘application,’ ‘integration,’ ‘hu-



man dimension,’ and ‘caring.’ Significant learning, then, is not (and cannot be) limited to simply memorizing information and being able to recall it when required (Ayling, 2010). Significant learning involves much more, not the least of which is being able to make connections between one’s life and one’s learning – that is, in acting on the knowledge, in connecting the proverbial dots. However, the goal-based, task-oriented curricula of most schools often do not allow room for such an active pursuit after connections.

## Dominant discourses and the problem of schooling

Although always present, these multiple funds of knowledge that students bring to the classroom with them are often not acknowledged; rather students “are often implicitly asked to set aside what and how they have come to know in the world” (Moje *et al*, n.d., p. 5) and embrace the dominant ways of knowing that are valued in the classroom. The consequence for the students, Sidorkin (2004) argue, is “a specific educational form of alienation” created through participation in meaningless, un-pleasurable activities and the production of useless ‘products’ – “useless not in a sense that students will not use them sometime in the future, but useless in terms of immediate use, or exchange for something else” (p. 3). And this is precisely where *adda* often scores one over classroom discussions because unlike in most classrooms, discourses generated in *adda* often have an immediate use-value for students’ social worlds, no matter how worthless such discourses might seem to adults observing from the sidelines. For instance, during the field-study for my dissertation, a student I interviewed expressed that he thought *adda* was important to youths like him because even though things discussed in *adda* might have little or no “education-value” (meaning being useful for grades), they are usually full of “life-value” which dissipates the moment the discussion enters the classroom space. When asked to elucidate what he meant by that, he provided me the following explanation:

(As a student of literature) *I’ve gone through literary works, where I’ve READ... for an example, Machiavelli’s (The) Prince*<sup>1</sup>, I (have) read... *^BUT the strategy which... one that I am thinking that in this particular political situation if I use this strategy... then it would be... you know? Useful for the party you favor... yes... now... the body you favor... political body. Now it is here (in the class) that I have read Machiavelli... but, what I am trying to say is: this is how something should be done. But if I say this in class, people will listen to me... then it is forgot-*

<sup>1</sup> *Il Principe* (The Prince) by Niccolò Machiavelli is a work of political philosophy, first published in Italian around 1532 that is studied in the department of Comparative Literature in the Indian university where I conducted my dissertation research.

*ten!* Because it is only something that I am trying to explain *theoretically* (theoretical talk). *Practically* I can use it only when I say it to a *political body* or to my *friends* outside the classroom that, “listen, you do this the *next time* when, you know, something happens, like during the (student union) *election*, you try this *strategy!!!*” *He'd listen to it, he would think about it, he can apply it... at least one per cent... if s/he applies it, and if it's hit... that idea would then become used to, it would enter the processing... at least somewhere my idea I can share, I can express... that is... which can be used later on.*<sup>2</sup>

This clearly brings forth the perceived divide in my young friend's mind between the epistemological and ontological paradigms of the school-world and that of the social world of adda. In the social world of adda, a student's re-interpretation of strategies from a 16th century political treatise by an Italian diplomat and political theorist is heard with the expressed interest of being employed during a student union election; and the consequence is that even if only “one per cent” of that which is discussed is applied in praxis and it enters “the processing” or starts a new trend, the student would have produced a useful product “in terms of (its) immediate use” and exchange value. And even in the event the student's idea is not or cannot be used in practice, the invested interest with which it is usually received by his peers in adda and the expressed intent of its possible application in the near future ensures that the student's utterance is answered, in the Bakhtinian sense of the word. The fact that the student's ideas are considered worth implementing and, as such, is received with interest, infuses his discourse with a certain “exchange value” or “life-value” that makes it a “useful product.” However, the classroom space provides a stark contrast where the very same ideas are destined to dissipate in vacuum; where, as my participant put it, ideas such as using Machiavellian strategies for winning student elections are heard but “then it is forgotten” as merely another theoretical gibberish of a hyper-imaginative student. Worse still, the stifling space of the classroom often doesn't even allow for such thoughts to be germinated, much less being articulated. And besides alienation and ennui, the dominant school discourses often also create structures of inequality within the school (and outside) in which, as Heath (2001) has shown, children acculturated into specific ‘ways of taking’ in their communities that are different from the ‘ways of taking’ privileged in schools are marginalized.

Moje *et al* (n.d) stress the importance of “active integration of various knowledges, Discourses, and literacies that teachers and youth bring to school” (p. 4), particularly in multicultural classrooms. They argue that this is important for “supporting youth in learning how to navigate the texts and literate practices

<sup>2</sup> During the interview, both English and Bengali were used. Words and phrases originally spoken in English have been retained unaltered and italicized.

necessary for survival in secondary schools and in the ‘complex, diverse, and sometimes dangerous’ world they will be a part of beyond school” (p. 3).

My argument is that students, particularly college students, more often than not, already know “how to navigate the texts and literate practices necessary for survival,” (Moje *et al*, n.d., p. 3) both in school and in their social worlds beyond school, as exemplified in their successful navigation of the spaces of *adda*, hang out, or that of the “messaging around time” Moje *et al* (n.d.). What they might lack, and where a critical humanities educator might be of help, is metacognition or awareness of what they already know, how they came upon that knowledge, and how their knowledge in various spheres of life mutually inform and connect with each other, as also their ethical imperative to act responsibly based upon their knowledge. Although Moje *et al*’s (n.d.) study focuses on high school science literacy, the authors point out that their arguments are equally applicable to other content area literacies because more than just reading the word, literacy is about reading the world in all its complexities (Alim, 2011).

‘Consciousness-raising,’ therefore, I believe, should be the purpose and goal of critical humanities education – a goal larger than what is generally ascribed to the discipline. ‘Consciousness-raising’ implies not only being aware of the inequalities that exist in our society or what makes each of us unique and similar at the same time, but it also entails being aware of and sensitive to our ethical responsibilities in the world. In other words, a critical humanities scholar is one who sees the social world as interconnected and assumes an agentic role for each of us in that world. She sees the social world as an intricate web of inequitable power relations and assumes responsibility of ethical action for individuals. She also sees the social world as a dialogic construct that is dynamic, ever changing and unfinished, and is full of possibilities. A critical humanities scholar is thus skeptical of neat categories, of labels, and binaries such as good and bad; right or wrong. Sheila Schwartz (1968) writes that the first essential characteristic of a humanities educator is “a *tolerance for ambiguity*” (p. 9, original emphasis). She writes:

The humanities teacher cannot function with an emotional need for closure, for neat packages, for the completion of subjects or ideas, or for dependence on examinations. (p. 9)

Therefore, a critical humanities educator needs to actively seek out connections between the multiple social worlds of the youth and between the multiple funds of knowledge that they bring to school in order to make the dialogism inherent in our society, and in each of us, more visible to the students. The task of a critical humanities educator is to help students come to the realization that not only are there multiple ways of making meaning, but that meaning of any act

or utterance is dialogically negotiated by us from our own unique ideological positions in the particular context of the act or the utterance (Bakhtin, 1984). To this end, a critical humanities educator should do all she could to promote dialogue and answerability in the classroom.

“A second essential characteristics [of a humanities teacher],” writes Schwartz (1968), “is an understanding of the importance of dialogue or student talk” (pp. 9–10). Although distinct from Bakhtin’s idea of dialogue, this implies that a critical humanities educator should also deeply care about and sincerely attempt to understand the students’ desires (Alim, 2011) and the things that are meaningful to them, even if they don’t seem meaningful to the teacher within the official school Discourse (Moje *et al*, n.d; 2004). Because promoting dialogue in the classroom is the simplest way for a teacher to bridge differences (Hooks, 1994). However, in order to engage students and teachers in dialogues within the school-world, we need to make some provisions for it.

## Permeable curriculum

Dyson (1993) has illustrated how dialogue and answerability could be achieved in the classroom space through a permeable curriculum. A permeable curriculum is porous; it allows for the percolation of the ‘outside’ – the playground, the community, the church, and the *adda* – into the classroom. It is a curriculum that allows and makes provision for connecting the various unofficial social worlds (such as the “peer sphere” and “home sphere”) of the student with the official school-world (“official sphere”), and encourages students to draw from their various funds of knowledge. Within a permeable curriculum, the students’ various lived experiences – her ‘ways of taking’ and making meaning in the world – in her home, in her community, in her interaction with her peers, in her participation in and consumption of popular culture are all acknowledged as valid sources of knowledge that inform her learning in school. Fischer’s work reviewed by Alim (2011), in a high school in the Bronx area illustrates how a permeable curriculum could be combined with Hip Hop pedagogy. Fischer narrates an ethnographic tale of a teacher named Joe, who, using a decolonizing methodology that emphasized reciprocity through an ‘open mic’ tradition and the use of a mixed-language variety that Joe and his students called ‘Bronxonic, created “an elective spoken word poetry class for a diverse group of Latino and African American 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders” (Fischer, 2007; cited in Alim, 2011: 134–136). However, Alim (2011) points out that Joe’s ‘spoken word poetry class,’ like other similar classes that use non-traditional pedagogies, are mostly relegated to

the marginal spaces of elective classes and after-school programs within the official ‘school-world.’ And although that’s a start, I believe we could do better.

I propose that infusing *adda*-epistemology with class discussions via a permeable curriculum within the critical humanities discipline could be helpful in “develop[ing] a *metaliteracy* in students for the purpose of raising their social consciousness” by connecting critical discourses on “contentious histories and uses of literacy” to the students’ everyday lived-experiences (Alim, 2011: 140; emphasis in original). Such alternative pedagogy, I believe, also has the potential for creating an engaging, meaningful and dialogic learning space for students where things they value in life are valued by all for what they are worth; where students’ multiple funds of knowledge are all acknowledged; and where students’ thoughts and ideas are not heard only to be forgotten or dismissed moments later, but are rather used for informing praxis.

Moreover, the lack of a definitive generic structure of *adda* and its elusive cultural definition might be helpful for teachers to sneak it into a traditional classroom than, say, hip-hop, which could be more easily called out. This is because *adda*, more than a phenomenon, is a worldview – as discussed in the next section. At the worst, a classroom employing an *adda*-based pedagogy might seem no more than slightly ‘unruly’ and somewhat ‘lacking in direction’ to any outsider looking in.

## The social world of *adda*

In some countries of south Asia, including India and Bangladesh, *adda* refers to a regular and common (also often highly contested in terms of its cultural value) cultural practice of prolonged social talk in peer groups or friend circles in a relaxed atmosphere, usually during the evenings or on Sundays but not necessarily so. Dipesh Chakraborty (1999) defines *adda* as “the practice of friends getting together for long, informal, and unrigorous conversations” (p. 110). Debarati Sen (2011), calling *adda* a “distinct speech genre” practiced by the Bengalis for long, describes it as:

*Adda* is a kind of informal social talk, usually done in Bengali, among friends, colleagues, even family members, but historically its content has always been tied to something intellectual, like local and global politics, art, literature, and music. Also salient is its urban setting. *Adda* as a word means both a form of talk and a place associated with it... The word *adda* exists in many Indian languages, but in Indian public discourse it has become synonymous with Bengali identity and culture. (p. 522, emphasis mine)

Whether or not distinctively Bengali and inherently intellectual (and what constitutes intellectuality is a debatable topic), most people who have participated in *adda* in some form would generally agree that it is, if anything, extremely engaging and pleasurable. The attraction of *adda*, according to several Bengali cultural commentators, is the sheer joy of talking – the pleasure of engaging in meaningful dialogues with others. Meaningful not in the sense of its value as a product that could be used or exchanged (although *adda* sometimes do function as cultural capital for the educated, middle-class Bengalis), nor in the sense in which schools typically value certain activities as ‘meaningful’ but meaningful in a personal sense as a deeply satisfying social intercourse with peers on matters that matter to us all, even if only temporarily. As an intensely pleasurable leisure activity, *adda* becomes meaningful as a product for immediate consumption by those who produce it (Sidorkin, 2004). Formwise, *adda* is not much different from the breakout group discussions in schools that we are familiar with or, for that matter, from any kind of group talk. What makes *adda* distinct from breakout groups in the classrooms is the lack of adult supervision and policing of its content<sup>3</sup> – the myriad things that are discussed in *adda*, the stories of various life-experiences that are narrated, and what counts as knowledge or knowing, that is, its epistemology. In *adda*, one’s knowledge of something, be it the latest love-interest of some celebrity or whether a communist government is good for the country’s economy, need not be backed by references to books or scholarly writings, although references to books and other texts are not uncommon. In *adda*, one just knows based on praxis or experience, irrespective of whether that knowledge can be supported with factual evidence or not. As Bruner (1996) puts it, “[o]ur practices often presuppose knowledge that is plainly not accessible to us by means other than praxis” (p. 105); and the example<sup>4</sup> he gives is that of the knowledge of grammar that is required for our daily conversations, but which many amongst us may not know that we actually ‘know.’ It is perhaps for this reason that claims made in *adda* are often backed with personal stories and anecdotes for evidence. This however does not mean that anything goes and that views and opinions go unchallenged. On the contrary, *adda* as a speech genre is marked by frequent heated arguments and counter-arguments. However, the crux of the matter is that in *adda* one’s theories and opinions based on knowing-in-the-world is just as easily accepted as evidence as someone

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<sup>3</sup> On occasions when I had purposefully retired to a corner of the classroom and let my American undergrads discuss unsupervised for long enough, I have noticed that breakout groups in classrooms tend to turn into something very similar to *adda* rather quickly.

<sup>4</sup> Incidentally Bakhtin (1986) also uses the very same example in connection to our uses of speech genres in our everyday language often without suspecting it.

else’s counter-opinions and counter-theories based on the same worldly knowledge. And if an agreement cannot be reached on one or the other view even after extensive debating, then people are just as happy with a difference of opinion on unresolved issues; the discussion simply moves on to some other topic. Several commentators on *adda* (Bose, 2010; Chattopadhyay, 2010; Das, 2010; Ghosh, 2010; Gupta, 2010; Mitra, 2010; Singh, 2010) have mentioned that it is not in the least uncommon to see people in *adda*, who were fighting to an extent just short of name-calling only moments ago, to take each other’s side on another issue – disagreements, nor agreements, between people need be final and does not normally generate animosity or disrespect for each other. Such attitude towards each other and towards knowing-in-the-world makes *adda*, contrary to what it might appear to outsiders, a tolerant, democratic and a dialogic space, where, as the Bengali scholar and poet, Buddhadeb Bose (2010) writes:

Everybody must have equal status and respect... While it is impossible to avoid differences [of power, status, social standing, etc.] between people in practical life, yet those who don’t know how to strip themselves off such differences along with their work-dress will never get a taste of *adda*. (p. 13; rough translation from original Bengali; emphasis added).

Bose (2010) further writes about the compassion and fellow-feeling necessary to make *adda* work:

There’s got to be diversity of thoughts and beliefs [in an ideal *adda*], but there should also be deep fellow-feeling and understanding [between participants in *adda*]. *Adda* is only for those who are drawn towards each other by strong emotions of compassion and fellow-feeling, and should only be restricted between them (p. 13; rough translation from original Bengali; emphasis added).

As is evident from Bose’s writing, *adda* is essentially of dialogic nature. Moreover *adda* acknowledges multiple accentuality, varying points-of-view, different ‘funds of knowledge,’ and is framed within the ethics of answerability. As one fellow Bengali, graduate student once pointed out to me, one of the implicitly agreed upon rules of *adda* is that as long as the discussions and stories are interesting, has internal consistency, and includes the rest, everybody participates and nobody really cares if the matter under discussion or the narratives could be scientifically proven or not; judging others is not for people who love *adda* (Shilpak Banerjee, 2012, personal communication).

Classroom discussions and activities often lack this spirit of dialogism and answerability. In the classrooms, more than differences of opinions and plurality of meanings, there are often a right answer and a wrong one; and worse still, students’ responses in the classroom are categorized by teachers as relevant or

irrelevant, such as Eugenie's take on President Lincoln's love-life in the example above. In fact, even differences of opinions that exist are often not shared in classrooms as Moje *et al* (n.d) illustrate with the example of a student who shared her objection to her teacher's claim about smoke being always white with the researcher sitting-in, but not with the teacher and the rest of the class that the researcher(s) observed. Moje *et al* (n.d.) conjectured that the student's reluctance in sharing her difference of opinion with the class possibly stemmed from her perception of the classroom space as not being safe or inclusive enough for dissenting student voices. While that could very well be the reason, perhaps not any less likely as a possibility for the student not sharing her opinion was her perception that her experiential evidence (she had once seen black smoke emanating from a coal fire) for her claim – an evidence that might be sufficient in her peer-world – might not measure up to the 'scientific' epistemology of the school-world.

Although Bakhtin says that every utterance by nature is dialogic (and the case of the dissenting student above, even though she doesn't voice her opinion publicly or engage the teacher in a dialogue, is a perfect example), educators often do not consciously promote or encourage dialogism in the classroom. Rather, as Conklin (2008) shows with the example of her student-teacher who had rejected one of her students' response to a question ("What is an example of disruption?") as not being on task (the student had offered his sister as an example of 'disruption'), teachers often stamp-out opportunities for engaging students in dialogues, and along with that the interpretative process of meaning-making that normally constitute a big part of each of our everyday lives.

## **Adda pedagogy and its challenges**

Engaging in *adda* pedagogy in the classroom is not easy by any means though. The biggest and perhaps the most obvious challenge to such pedagogy is the curriculum that specifies learning goals and outcomes for the class, and often even stipulates instructional and evaluative procedures and methods. *Adda* on the contrary lacks this precise structure and agenda of classroom instruction, and it's not evaluative. This doesn't, however, mean that people never judge each other in *adda*, but just that *adda* does not have any specific goal or purpose, which nullifies the requirement for any sort of evaluation of progress towards a common goal. In the words of Bose (2010):

The first and foremost rule of a successful *adda* is that it lacks any and all rules. There is no agenda and no inherent purpose to *adda*, and yet one shouldn't even be mindful of that (p. 12; rough translation from original Bengali).



Such description of *adda* as ‘purposeless’ interaction with one’s peers that produces no apparently ‘positive’ outcome or result resembles the “messaging around time” for the Latino and African American youth Moje *et al* (n.d.) worked with. Although apparently purposeless, such “messaging around time” usually generates valuable funds of knowledge for youths. It is during such times that the youth engage with popular culture, politics, as well as a host of other oral and literate practices:

The ‘messaging around’ that often seems to be aimless, or even problematic, activity of youth is replete with social purpose and literate practice. What makes this category relevant to our study is that the activities youth engage in when ‘messaging around’ often have some direct relevance to scientific and other content-area literacy learning, particularly as the youth engage in Discursive practices similar to those demanded in school content areas, such as making claims and providing warrant for choices of music, media, and clothing. It is in these activities, often unmediated by adults, that they teach each other concepts and practice forms of Discourse that are unique to youth culture. They learn, for example, the music that is considered popular, the forms of language that are acceptable, and how to make signs and written symbols that will be read in particular ways by other youth. (pp. 32–33)

Similarly, in *adda* people learn from each other. Commenting on the often-invisible learning that happens in *adda*, Bose (2010) wrote in his memoir:

I have learned more from *adda* than from books. It was because of *adda* that I picked the apparently alluring fruits from the top branches of the tree of knowledge with relative ease. I also welcomed *adda* as the primary source for my literary endeavors. (p. 12; rough translation from original Bengali)

*Adda* is also the time when the students really come together as a peer community, and, as I have argued elsewhere (Dutta, 2015), this has important implications for the shaping of students’ social and cultural identities. However in the words of Dyson (1993), despite its learning benefits, an *adda* pedagogy like any other “negotiated classroom culture,” is hard to fit in within the “*unidirectional* curricular vision” of most classrooms (p. 9; emphasis in original). Dyson’s (1993) suggestion to teachers and students alike is to “be open, curious, and willing to imagine worlds beyond their own” (p. 9). *Adda* too, according to Bose (2010), Chattopadhyay (2010), and Mitra (2010), works best when people approach it with an open mind, curiosity and a ‘willing suspension of disbelief.’

The second challenge of an *adda* pedagogy is creating a congenial space for *adda* to flourish. Bose (2010) and several others (Chattopadhyay, 2010; Das, 2010; Ghosh, 2010; Mitra, 2010) stress the importance of a congenial atmosphere for *adda* to flourish. Although Bose’s (2010) emphasis has been on the physical

environment of *adda*, yet undoubtedly, intimate *adda* is not possible without a sense of an informal and safe space. Dyson (1993) points out that it is not enough for teachers to acknowledge the various social worlds of students and the multiple funds of knowledge that they bring to school. A teacher should actively seek to create such a dialogic space where students could make connections between their school-world and their peer-world, as well as between their other social worlds and the social worlds of their peers and their teachers too. The teacher should also model for the students how to help each other in collective learning and meaning making, while being mindful and respectful of individual differences and the different ways of meaning making that people employ. Such a space is invaluable both for students' learning and identity development.

Yet ironically, it is often the presence of the teacher that hinders the creation of such a space. An Indian graduate student and an avid fan of *adda*, who went to the same university as I did, once told me that it is difficult, if not impossible, to create an *adda*-like informal environment within a class (even if the class meets at the cafeteria) because the very presence of the teacher as a symbol of authority signals to students, already acculturated into the official school-ways, of the purposefulness of the "official agenda" of the class-space and the 'official' ways of behavior that are favored in such spaces (Aditi Samajpati, 2011, personal communication). This view finds support in Dyson (1993), when, citing Sleeter & Grant, she writes:

Indeed, by the middle school years, the life worlds of schools and those of peers and communities are often rigidly separated in the minds of students. (p. 28)

Indeed then, creating such a space within the formal world of the classroom (irrespective of where the classroom is set up) is difficult and would demand considerable patience and perseverance from the teacher, who essentially has to learn to become her students' 'friend' in order to create a space where students could open up. Personifying the proverbial definition of a teacher as a friend, philosopher and guide should be the aim of a teacher wishing to employ *adda* pedagogy.

However, the creation of an informal *adda*-like space is not the only challenge before the educator. Like most other cultural practices, despite its definite advantages both inside and outside the classroom, *adda* is itself not unproblematic and poses several challenges. Perhaps diversity – its biggest asset, is also its greatest challenge. As Nipendra Krishna Chatopadhyay (2010) points out that *adda* is with all sorts of people and not all of them have similar considerations for others – some are opinionated, some always attempt to hog the limelight, others love to talk a lot and might never want to give others a chance to speak,

and yet others consider themselves an authority of sorts on certain topics, and sometimes even on all topics like the famous Sheldon Cooper of *Big Bang Theory*, to draw an example from pop culture. And then there’s the ‘moral-police,’ the ‘critic,’ and the ‘self-appointed mentor,’ with an advice for everyone on everything, whether people want advice or not. Outside the stratified and policed space of the regular classroom with the teacher in command and explicit rules of conduct strictly in place, such participants could, ironically, pose a challenge to the creation of a democratic and inclusive environment for all. Moreover, *adda* by nature is meandering – it flows from one topic to another, as Radhaprashad Gupta (2010) notes:

True *adda* does not have any fixed agenda like business, political or academic discussions and meetings. None can say how an *adda* will begin on a particular day, where it will end and what all would be discussed and debated over along the way. Let’s say at one moment the discussion is about some supernova in a faraway galaxy, the next moment it might be about Plekhanov’s *The role of individual in history*. (p. 43, rough translation from original Bengali)

Such description of *adda* would undoubtedly scare away many teachers, whose penchant for orderliness in the classroom and categorization of topics of discussion by subject-areas is well known. “How could we teach if students start talking about *Alice in Wonderland* in a math class,” they would complain. And yet, Lewis Carroll was a mathematician himself! May I ask what is wrong with discussing *Alice* in a math class if the flow of discussion somehow leads us to it? Classification of content areas is neither integral nor an essential prerequisite for learning; they were invented for the purpose of schooling and reflect schools’ need for control over students learning and orderliness more than anything else. Our ‘knowing-in-the-world’ is not packaged into neat little subject categories. If anything, it is messy, incomplete and interconnected like a wiki. Moreover, it is propelled by our interests and curiosities. It is but natural for a sustained discussion on any topic to lead us to other related topics just as clicking on links in a wiki takes us to different but related pages. Yet such naturally free-flowing discussions are often not tolerated in classrooms, where nothing but math could be discussed in a math class and even within the subject genre, discussions are usually limited to the ‘topic-of-the-day’ as per the syllabus, whether it is algebra, geometry or arithmetic. It is this tyranny of subjects that has caused alternative pedagogies like hip hop or spoken word pedagogies to be relegated to such marginal spaces like elective classes and after-school programs within the school-world and *adda* pedagogy too, if employed at all, can only find a place for itself in these marginal spaces unless we are willing to reconceptualize our mental model of schools.

Let us for a moment imagine a school where classes are not organized by subjects and students are not grouped by grade-years. In this hypothetical model school of ours, students would not be assigned to teachers and classes; rather faculty members would organize *addas* and students would be free to join the 'teacher' and other students in any number of these *addas* based on their intellectual interests and compatibility with the group. When these groups meet, there will be no agenda, no set topic for discussion; rather the tone of the *adda* would be set by some mutual, overlapping interests of the group members, including the faculty, whether it is science, literature, wood-carving, nature study, philosophy, popular culture, sports or all of these. The students and teachers should come together in these *addas* based on their common interests like birds of the same feather flock together. If a student does not find the *adda* congenial to his or her intellectual curiosities or if otherwise the student doesn't feel drawn to the *adda* or the group for some reason, he or she would be free to check out other *addas* till the student finds the right *adda* just like people do in real life in the place where I grew up. And if the right *adda* couldn't be found, the student could start one. In any case, students shouldn't be forced to sit in a class or made to participate in discussions and class-work that does not appeal to their intellectual interests. As with *addas*, we can be assured of students' interest and cooperation in learning when they show up in 'class' knowing that attendance is not obligatory.

And how may we deal with the potential disruptive behavior in our *adda*-class – the students who talk too much or too loudly, who move around or talk about unrelated topics, and those who are opinionated and are not ready to listen to others? First of all, in this model school-world of ours based on Bakhtinian philosophy of dialogue and answerability and an *adda*-based pedagogy, there's no such thing as disruptive behavior or unrelated topic. Commenting on the value of compassion and acceptance in *adda*, Chattopadhyay (2010) writes that in *adda* one needs to accept others for who they are and, moreover, listen and respond to them as well. This echoes Bakhtin's notion of answerability that "we are ethically obligated to listen to our counterpart's utterance and morally compelled to respond to them as well" (Hults, Infante, 2012, unpagged). Secondly, the ethics of answerability cannot be imposed; it needs to be cultivated and nurtured. Therefore, if a student is not ready to listen and engage in authentic dialogue with others in her group, the ethical solution is definitely not to shut her down or otherwise exclude her from the discussion. The educator needs to model answerability for her students by practicing answerability herself.

In his essay on *adda*, Chakraborty (2010) writes about the most important person in every *adda* – important not for his status among the group, nor for his standing in society, but important because the role that he plays in keeping the *adda* going. Although this person is neither elected nor nominated, does not hold any position or have a special status within the group and is not even acknowledged by others for his or her role in *adda*, this person, known as the *addadhari*, is the central character of any *adda* who holds people together in place, acting like a centripetal force. According to Chakraborty (2010), the *addadhari*, who would also typically be the host for *addas* that meet at private venues, has to be an ideal listener – sincere, patient, respectful, knowledgeable, and compassionate. The *addadhari* also needs to be an expert moderator – not in the sense of a typical moderator of a debate who ensures that every participant gets his or her timely chance to speak by cutting short those who tend to speak too much or who tend to talk about perceivably unrelated topics, but as one who can always come up with fresh and interesting conversation starters or conversation turners whenever the discussion appears to all as starting to get redundant. The *addadhari* is usually the one to offer an interesting take on someone’s views, thereby propelling the discussion towards new and exciting directions. In my view, the teacher in our hypothetical *adda*-based class should resemble the *addadhari* – a knowledgeable and compassionate person with a wide array of interests, and one who’s also an ace conversationalist. But most importantly, she or he must be committed to promoting dialogue and the ethics of answerability.

If such an educational institution as imagined above sounds utopian, let me point out that at least it is not entirely hypothetical. The gymnasiums in ancient Greece and the *gurukulas* in ancient India were both educational institutions that, at least partly, adhered to a similar model of schooling as above. Closer to our times, in 1918, Nobel laureate Indian philosopher, poet and educationist, Rabindranath Tagore started a university called Vishwa-Bharati (literally meaning the confluence of the world and India) in the now famous town of Santiniketan (abode of peace) near Bolpur in the Birbhum district of the state of West Bengal in India. A major hub for international students from all over the world, Vishwa-Bharati, at least during Tagore’s lifetime (1861–1941), was famous for its alternative pedagogy that included, among other things, a tradition of holding ‘classes’ in the open, very much in the style of an *adda*. Sadly, the school of his ideals, based on his vision of a free, un-fragmented and wholesome education that “has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit,” has today succumbed to the very practices of modern schooling that Tagore wanted to shield it from (Tagore, 1912, unpagged).

## Concluding thoughts and remarks

To conclude, building on Moje *et al* (n.d., 2004) and Dyson's (1993) work within a Bakhtinian framework of dialogism and ethics of answerability, I have attempted to argue in this paper the need for a critical humanities educator to create dialogic learning spaces within classrooms that would be engaging for students; a classroom where students would be encouraged to draw from their various 'funds of knowledge' in order to connect their 'school-world' with their other social worlds. I have pointed out the interconnected nature of our knowing-in-the-world and suggested that teachers adopt an *adda*-based pedagogy, through a permeable curriculum, for promoting wholesome, student-centered learning in schools that would harness students' various 'funds of knowledge' both in and outside schools. Such a college or university classroom employing an *adda*-based pedagogy should appear to all, students and teachers alike, less like a classroom-space, even when set within a conventional classroom, and more like a 'hang-out' place or a *r'ok*<sup>5</sup> where students would be welcome to bring just about any topic to the table, and where the orderliness of content-area instruction would be happily abandoned in favor of curiosity-driven learning. In essence, such a permeable college or university classroom-space would be very similar to the forum-like learning space envisioned by Anne Haas Dyson (1993) for elementary grade students:

I am suggesting a *forum*, within which children might explain about Lincoln and imagined loves, about Jaws in the deep and decisions about clams, and within which we as educators connect their efforts with the world beyond. And, at the same time, it is a forum in which our own world view is enriched by those of the children (p. 32, emphasis in original).

Although I have chosen critical humanities as a discipline to base my arguments on because critical humanities typically focus on issues of inclusiveness in a diverse, multicultural world fraught with power inequalities and, therefore, when it comes to its students, the field needs to demonstrate the inclusiveness that it preaches; and also because the field most commonly employs whole class or break-out group discussions as a mode of instruction, among others, that makes it easier for teachers to employ an *adda*-based pedagogy. Yet such a model of learning could, with some essential modifications, be used for any content-area literacy.

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<sup>5</sup> A stoop-like structure, facing the street, on both sides of the main entrance to a house that was once an integral part of Calcutta's architecture and was primarily used to hold *addas*.

*Adda* itself, and particularly the use of *adda* in the classroom, do generate some challenges for educators. However, the benefits of using *adda*-based pedagogy in the classroom far out-weigh its disadvantages. Therefore, educators who care about building a democratic, equitable and engaging learning environment should consider bringing *adda* into their classrooms.

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## „Porozmawiajmy”: zalety dialogu i odpowiedzi w programach edukacji humanistycznej opartej na zasadach pedagogiki *adda*

### Streszczenie

Bezosobowy charakter większości typów szkół sprawia, że nauczyciele i uczniowie odnoszą często wrażenie zerwania więzi ich łączących. Spostrzeżenie to dostrzega także wielu badaczy tematu, jak np. Anne Haas Dyson, którzy wskazują, że to właśnie poczucie separacji jest dla nich wspólnym mianownikiem spotykanym nierzadko w instytucjach takich jak szkoły. Stanowisko to znajduje potwierdzenie nawet nie tyle na poziomie edukacji szkolnej, co bardziej w przypadku uniwersytetów i innych szkół wyższych. Są to instytucje silnie zróżnicowane pod względem kadry, gdyż do ludzi uniwersytetu zaliczamy nie tylko studentów i profesorów, ale także kadrę administracyjną i techniczną. Ta bardzo heterogeniczna grupa ludzi stanowi podmiot koncepcji Molle'a „fundamentu wiedzy”. Zgodnie z tą koncepcją założyć można, że każdy z nas jest nosicielem wielu typów wiedzy pochodzącej ze społecznych światów przez nas zamieszkiwanych. Te różnorakie *fundamenty wiedzy* „są w przypadku studentów zawarte pomiędzy oficjalnym światem *szkolnym* a światem *rówieśniczym*”. Są one też obecne w przestrzeni klasy jako jej immanentny element. Wskazanie na nie pozwala na reinterpretację roli szkoły oraz naświetlenie pojawiających się w tym kontekście „zaskakujących nowych społecznych i kulturowych znaczeń”. W takiej sytuacji ujawnia się potrzeba dialogu. Zgodnie z myślą Bakhtina dialog pojawia się tam, gdzie znaczenia są niedokończone, zanika zaś tam, gdzie są one dookreślone i pełne. Pociąga on za sobą również stworzoną przez Bakhtina koncepcję „odpowiedzi”. Tak rozumiana przestrzeń szkolna, wypełniona możliwością dialogu i otwartością na odpowiedzi, jest oczywiście umieszczona także w kontekście dominujących dyskursów edukacyjnych oraz innych. Niemniej głównym założeniem niniejszego tekstu jest twierdzenie mówiące, że uczniowie i studenci wiedzą doskonale, jak nawigować w tak ukształtowanej przestrzeni, a proces nauczania wymaga w takim wypadku wypracowania nowych metod i dróg kształcenia, które będą lepiej odpowiadały wspomnianym „fundamentom wiedzy”. W sukces przychodzi w tym przypadku azjatycka koncepcja *adda*. Pojęcie to odnosi się do nieformalnych form nabywania wiedzy poprzez tworzenie możliwości bezpośredniego i partnerskiego dialogu. „Pedagogika *adda*”, której zarys został przedstawiony w tym tekście, nie ma definitywnej struktury, nie jest też zinstytucjonalizowana. Pojęcie to znajduje zastosowanie przede wszystkim w praktykach społecznych w krajach takich jak np. Bangladesz lub Indie. Największym wyzwaniem tego typu pedagogiki jest zaś wypracowanie takiego programu nauczania, w którym cele kształcenia są jasno określone. *Adda* nie ma bowiem sformalizowanej struktury, a jej forma przybiera często kształt swobodnej konwersacji. Pedagogika tego typu zawiera istotny potencjał, dzięki któremu sięga ona do głębszych zasobów edukacyjnych i może tym samym stać się istotnym uzupełnieniem tradycyjnych metod nauczania.