
Intercultural Education: Theories, Policies and Practice

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1 Introduction and overview

Derek Woodrow and Gajendra K. Verma

This book is the result of a number of European Union and Council of Europe initiatives. The major stimulus came from an intensive course held in Lisbon in 1994 as part of two Erasmus networks exploring the nature of intercultural studies on a European-wide basis. The participants, lecturers and postgraduate students, came from Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, England and Scotland under the title of the network 'Intercultural Relations and Education: Theories, Policies and Practices'. It has two clear focuses of concern, one is the development of the issues relating to mutual understanding between nations, societies and cultural groups in order to lessen tensions and promote and enable meaningful communication between the citizens of Europe and the World. The second is derived from the inner problems of States and communities in ensuring equal opportunities and individual rights within multicultural societies and tackling the problems of discrimination.

The importance of this initiative within Europe is immense and can be seen from the range of initiatives which have been sponsored. These are described by Rocha-Trindade and Mendes who review the development of growth of these policies, and contributions within this volume derive not just from the sponsoring Erasmus project but also from a Tempus project (designed to provide support for Eastern Europe in its moves towards democracy by sharing academic knowledge and programmes), another Erasmus project concerned with the development of a European Certificate in Comparative and International Educational Studies and from an international conference organised by the Adam Institute for Democracy entitled Education for Democracy. The issues discussed in this book are clearly significant in the development of modern societies as they seek to come to terms with the revolution in intercultural relations brought about by mass communications and

global transport. The world is rapidly having to come to terms with cultural and social differences which can no longer be kept separate in their protective groups in the manner discussed by Vinsonneau. Indeed the very nature of cultures now has a dynamic and volatility which is beginning to concern cultural leaders, and has led to the protestive resurgence of fundamentalism which challenges world order and harmonious society.

The book broadly follows the dichotomy indicated earlier, with the first half essentially looking at the theoretical underpinnings of intercultural studies, leading to considerations of multiple interpretations of both interculturalism and of comparative conceptualisations in different cultures. Campani looks at the dynamic reconstruction of intercultural education, as it develops into a theoretical rationale for the policies of multiculturalism and pluralism which have been central to the social policies of Member States. Combatting racism and xenophobia has been a central tenet of European development ever since the Second World War. Vinsonneau discusses the way in which these 'protective' boundaries are created by groups and those in power situations. The preservation of power and authority are central to the rise of discrimination by introspective looking sectarian movements. Yet the more communication and interchange increase, the more interdependent peoples become and these motivations become outdated yet still remain as central social drives. In this context, notions of 'self' and of 'identity', whether of individuals or groups, are severely challenged. Their meaning in a world with changing and flexible boundaries is clearly in need of reassertion and redefinition as they respond to the wider context of globalisation, and this is taken up by Oriol as a basis for understanding the role and reaction of groups to the threat to their identity. This increasingly dynamic nature of cultures and of their conceptualisation is discussed by Garcia-Castano and Pulido-Moyano. They argue against the traditional fixed view of culture as a static and meaningful categorisation of what are in fact groups of varied and fluid individuals, each dependent upon their own reality rather than being cloned images of some idealised cultural image.

The central section of the book is concerned more with comparative data, contrasting different societies and their different historical philosophies. Within one text, only a limited number of comparative issues can be developed in any depth but equally the total agenda for greater knowledge of intercultural assumptions and mores needs to be kept in perspective if coherent development is to take place. The implications of these social parameters on Educational beliefs and purposes are then taken up. Woodrow looks at the significant differences between different cultures in theoretical beliefs about how learning

takes place. Even theory, it is maintained, is culturally created and leads to different conceptualisation in different societies. These differences are again turned into discriminating consequences by the social power brokers. The next two papers look at aspects of teacher training. Besalu considers the nature of teacher training in the context of interculturalism, looking at the nature of preparing teachers for a world view and for the development and delivery of a curriculum for equity, a curriculum for all. Ribero uses teacher training courses to examine the difficulties in transferring educational curricula and systems from one context to another, again challenging the notion that any society has absolute solutions to educational problems. This view of two societies and their educational needs is in the context of developing and developed countries, the north-south division to which answers must be found which respect rights and needs if the global world into which we are being drawn is not to be one of conflict and critical antagonism. The comparison of contexts is taken up in the remaining two papers in this section, both looking at inter-national comparisons. Johnson presents a different picture of intercultural knowledge in his research designed to illuminate the differing social ambiances which form the micro-societies of particular classrooms in different nations. By looking at such concepts as 'friction' and 'cohesion' within the primary classroom he illustrates the wealth of comparative data which is needed for meaningful inter-cultural discussion about schools and education. Bagley then looks at the nature of social reaction to mixed marriages and the children of mixed marriages in The Netherlands and Britain. He presents questions about differences in the two societies, both with traditional imperialist histories, and also raises issues about discrimination and racism, with which the final section of the book is concerned.

This volume brings together a number of papers which challenge the social assumptions and basis of democracy within modern societies. It returns to the fundamental rights of citizenship which form the critical *raison d'être* of both the United Nations and the European Community. In looking at the social and political conditions of discrimination and participation they touch upon the very heart of democracy and human development. Verma reviews the political and educational development and meaning of terms such as 'multiculturalism', 'cultural pluralism' and 'interculturalism'. He defines three goals and processes to which it must adhere. Gundara looks at representation and the meaning of citizenship in the complexity of a pluri-cultural Europe in a review of the political use of nationalism to exclude 'migrants' from rights and belonging, attacking Eurocentrism as a major problem in Europe. He also looks at the rise of xenophobic violence as a feature of insecure nationalism and the role of education as a counter-influence. Garratt and Robinson then look at the

way in which issues such as citizenship could be employed positively to form the core and driving force for school curricula, helping to forward an agenda for harmony and understanding across Europe and the world. Using the English National Curriculum as a vehicle for analysis they review the varying and divisive underlying forces which drive social, and even economic, issues out of the agenda of education in schools. Heathcote then looks at the politicisation of health education and promotion, commenting on the way in which such terms as empowerment, born in a context of equality and enfranchisement, nevertheless lead almost inevitably to implicit discrimination and the empowerment only of those already with power. Grant and Monasto look at particular national creations of interculturalism, critically reviewing developments in their own countries and at the way in which boundaries are maintained and supported. Grant reviews the recent history of intercultural relations within the United Kingdom, both of the complex internal nationalistic compromises, contrasts, cultural subordination and conflicts and also of the xenophobic antagonisms created towards groups of immigrants from outside the U.K. Monasta in a polemic article about Italy, sums up many of the frustrations and anxieties about unfeeling and unresponsive societies which seem to work to maintain divisiveness and privilege.

This book seeks to capture the complexity and breadth of intercultural studies in the modern world. It presents views of this debate from many quarters of Europe. There may be different conceptualisations, different priorities and concerns, but there is a common view of the critical importance in our newly globalized, open and mobile world society that discrimination, xenophobia and dismissive disparagement of others cannot be sustained without conflict and turmoil. Recent wars, financial catastrophes and environmental catastrophes have emphasised the interdependence of modern societies. Regressive nationalism cannot in the end be sustained, despite the fervour of some proponents. Education, as a major socialising agent, must assume responsibility for forwarding a world curriculum, an education for all, a quality education for all. This requires knowledge, understanding and an acceptance of varying perceptions and identities, all valid and 'right' in their context. Contrasts and varying conceptualisations are natural and sustainable, even individuals are now only temporarily and momentarily defined, individual cultures are constantly in flux and development in a world of continuous transformation and movement. Like the arrow in Zeno's paradox of motion, the definition of identity (of self or culture) once made describes its own inapplicability. It is the debate of the twentieth century, but its determination becomes ever more pressing as the century reaches its closure.

Part I

Educational policy and theories of identity

2 Intercultural education: policies within Europe

Maria Beatriz Rocha-Trindade and Maria Luisa Sobral Mendes

The plurality of human groups is translated at the material level by the diversity of their geographic settlements and by differences of ancestral ethnic origin. At the cultural level this plurality is explained by linguistic and religious diversity and historical collective memory: a conceptual set of features known as cultural identity. Throughout the centuries, the settlement of different groups in well-defined territories where they became majorities gave rise to the creation of nations. These nations presented a certain degree of homogeneity as far as the above-mentioned material and conceptual characteristics were concerned. Whenever their stability and safety involved the establishment of sovereign regions, externally recognised as such and exercised within their respective territories, these nations became States (see note 1).

The reciprocal relations between State and Nation were not always established nor did they always prevail. Invasions, wars and treaties, as well as massive population movements, put an end to them and led to the co-existence of several nations within the same State. Colonial occupations also produced similar consequences. Many of these situations are now stable and it is common for a country to have several regions, differentiated by major nationalities and cultures. These nationalities and cultures have diverse characteristics in regard to language, religion, or ethnic origin. The creation of semi-autonomous regions with a certain degree of self-government is a sound solution to potential conflicts among the several socio-political forces operating within the same State. In other cases such conflicts may develop into major confrontations or even civil wars leading to fragmentation of the State.

So far a type of conceptual situation has been described that is clear cut, where each culture may be considered fairly homogeneous in a clearly defined territory. However, there are exceptions, including situations such as frequent

international migrations where the permanence of the movement leads to the settlement of foreign minority communities in the host countries. There are also post-decolonisation situations that leave a remnant of residents from the previous colonial power in the new independent countries, thus originating other types of minorities. It should also be noted that post-colonial situations usually produce migratory movements from the new States towards the previous imperial powers. This does not constitute a return migratory flow but in a way conveys a closing of the circle of bilateral mobilities.

Moving from these generalised historical frameworks, it is important to analyse the present and to project the current tendencies into the future. In many countries in Europe it is evident that there are communities of migratory origin, sometimes in significant numbers and whose differences become noteworthy. Within the European Community there have recently been several waves of individuals who have joined immigration movements for economic reasons. There are political or war refugees from African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Central and Eastern European countries presently experiencing volatile situations. These mass movements will often increase drastically when a generalised famine situation occurs in one of these countries (see note 2).

In spite of efforts to limit the entry of newcomers, the already settled minorities represent a very significant presence which needs to be taken into consideration in any political project. This is valid at the European Community level as well as at that of each State (the subsidiarity principle) aiming at the well-being of and social justice for all elements of the resident population.

Any political project designed to deal with this situation cannot be based upon goals of integration/assimilation of the minority groups in the majority societies. During the last three decades the American 'melting pot' dream has lost its credibility. The 'multicultural' approaches, which may be defined as a diversified set of different communities, whose interaction and social mobility are not necessarily taking place, also provide incomplete solutions (see note 3). Intercultural perspectives may well have more beneficial consequences. The term aims to convey a dynamic state of permanent interaction among present cultures. In order to achieve the good communications on which it depends it is necessary always to keep in mind two realities - universality and diversity. Quoting Lévi-Strauss - "La découverte de l'altérité est celle d'un rapport, non d'une barrière".

If one attempts to express the differences among the three previously mentioned approaches in another manner, one would delineate:

- an ethno-centric character to be the idealised concept of the ‘melting pot’ as it promotes the rule of generic culture as a result of the fusion of all present cultures;
- an ethno-plural character to the multicultural perspective based on a verified judgment of plurality;
- an ethno-interactive character to the multicultural vision brought about by a logic of contact, interpenetration and mutual influence of cultures.

Intercultural education is the action medium, the tool which results from this concept. The expression includes in the term ‘education’, all the components of formal and non-formal teaching, of family or community education and of all the other processes of organised social interaction aiming at the education of the individual. It also, therefore, includes the State’s pedagogical role in the production of rules and laws and the role played by the media in the shaping of public opinion.

With the economic development that took place following World War II, specifically from the 1960s onwards, the industrialised European countries welcomed the arrival of foreign workers from diversified cultural and linguistic backgrounds searching for better working and living conditions. Since then, the educational systems of the host-countries have been continuously receiving a large number of students from immigrant families. These families of diversified origins were faced with great adaptation difficulties of a social, cultural and linguistic nature. Consequently, those difficulties were also reflected in their children’s academic success.

The educational studies previously attempted in this field in other countries were not very conclusive. In the United States the studies of Bilingual Programmes were limited to language teaching and in practice they assumed a remedial methodology. In Canada the Heritage Language Programmes were conceived in response to local social circumstances. The cultures present were individualised but the programmes did not contemplate social interaction. In practice these educational policies proved inadequate to the needs of European countries due to the diversity of situations present in the heterogeneous character of the target populations.

Notwithstanding a previous practice of pedagogy which included several cultures involved in the educational process (as referred to in the Work Group Final Report Project 7) it became necessary to develop and to implement educational projects and experiences that comprised:

- actions developed by the educational authorities of the country of origin and the host-country;
- permanent information to all teaching agents concerned with the social, cultural and educational realities involved in the education of migrant populations;
- a commitment on the part of the institutions in charge of the education and training of teachers, either in the host-countries or in the countries of origin;
- the organisation of studies applying the knowledge acquired in the area of Human and Social Sciences to the teaching of migrant populations.

Moreover, the pioneering role played by the Council of Europe throughout the 1970s should be stressed.

As early as 1970 (Resolution 70/35 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers) and following the concerns felt by the institutions which implemented the education of migrants' descendants, the Member States were alerted to the situation in migrant communities and to the need to eliminate the difficulties of social and academic adaptation experienced by students of migrant origin; they were also alerted to the advantage of maintaining cultural and linguistic ties with the country of origin as well as to prepare their reintegration should those students ever decide to go back.

In 1975 (IX Permanent Conference of European Ministers of Education) all concerned Governments were invited to take measures aiming at promoting equal educational opportunities for migrant children as well as providing them with the possibility of learning the language and culture of the host country and of their country of origin. It was at about this time that the initiatives of the European Community concerning education in a multicultural context started to be observed. In 1977 the Council of Ministers of the European Community in accordance with Directive 77/486/EEC of July 25, adopted the following guidelines:

- to provide equal opportunities for basic education to the children of migrants;
- to provide courses on the language of the host-country using methodologies adequate to the students;