

Challenge Paper for the

EU Study on National Approaches to „Intercultural Dialogue“

The issue of “Intercultural Dialogue” in the European educational systems

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Expectations of ERICarts

This challenge paper should make visible the results of education research and networking practices in Europe addressing „Intercultural Dialogue“. Where appropriate, it should include, issues of minorities/immigrants and youth media or communication practices, which are relevant in this respect. In that context, obvious research deficits should be addressed.

Guidelines

“Acknowledged for a start, the heterogeneous composition of school classes can be source of inspiration and richness. It is permanently fostering creativity and enables the full range of pedagogic activities, which are dedicated to the characteristic of the children. Making use of the reservoir of knowledge, abilities skills and experiences, which is represented by the children, gives way to new ways of teaching and learning” (Ingrid Ohlsen, Teaching in Linguistically and Culturally Heterogeneous Classes)

“Special attention should be given to the integration of children with migrant background (the so-called second generation). This is crucial with regard to the aim of maximising economic benefits and reducing costs of immigration...As empirical evidence makes clear, language proficiency and education are key elements that decide upon the success or failure of immigrants and their children. This means promoting school education, job training and higher education for immigrants – in particular for those from middle and low-income countries” (Rainer Münz et. al, The Costs and Benefits of European Immigration,)

Preconditions

Changing public institutions

The idea of public schools throughout its existence is deeply rooted in a concept of culture that was formulated in the 19th century when industrialism became predominant. Schools as national institutions were – and are still widely – seen as a representation of a homogenous majority which was not used to deal with a minority of foreign citizens. As agencies for incorporating cultural belongings, the task of national schools was to level cultural differences and to exclude what could not be assimilated. But now it becomes fact that in more and more schools the ones that formerly represented homogenous majorities become minorities themselves.

During the last years the tremendous societal and technological development of European societies has exposed schools to considerable pressure to accomplish the necessary changes from industrial to knowledge based societies. Accordingly they are in need of reforming their justification from maintaining national homogeneities to the promotion of individual and collective plurality.

The UNESCO-Roadmap for Arts Education 2006 and other documents show the direction: “21st century societies are increasingly demanding workforces that are creative, flexible, adaptive and innovative and education systems need to evolve with these shifting conditions”

To educate this kind of work force, public schools will have to change their priorities from the mediation of academic knowledge to the mediation of competencies (following the EU- recommendations on the acquisition of key competencies for lifelong learning from December 2006). In the words of UNESCO: “...to bridge the growing divide between cognitive and emotional processing that reflects a greater focus in learning environments on emotional processes than on the development of (repeatable) cognitive skills which are often not related to the living environment of the learners.”

As a consequence individuality will find its way also into schools and classrooms: The time in which every child had to learn the same thing at the same time for the same reason will soon be a matter of the past. In the future, what counts is each child's personal development .

In such settings the individual potentials of the students will be the thriving forces of collaborative learning processes. By mutually acknowledging individual abilities and strengths of the students the need to separate the world between what traditions identified as “own” and what as “foreign” will decrease.

Main questions

How “Intercultural Dialogue“is interpreted? Have there been any changes in recent years?

The term “„Intercultural Dialogue“” does not have a long tradition within the European public school systems.

Intercultural Education

More often the term “Intercultural Education” was used in the pedagogic discussion since the 1980ies (Hohmann 1983, Reuter & Dodenhoeft 1988, Friesenhahn 1988, Auernheimer 1995) albeit often very vague. In the light of the fall of the iron curtain the participants of the Triannual Network Conference in Budapest 1993 declared the main challenge for “Intercultural Education” to fight against universal standardisation: “In this respect new possibilities must be sought in education in dealing with ethnic groups and cultures...It is important to learn to deal with the distinctiveness of foreign culture so that the encounter with it is experienced not a threat to own’ culture, but as an enrichment of it” (Christian Wolf, Education in Europe 1995).

Cristina Alleman-Ghionda was one of the first who brought into discourse the social dimension of the issue when she 1998 carried out an international comparative qualitative research on the relationships between education and socio-cultural diversity in four European countries. Her results were a plea for modernisation of the national school systems facing increasing linguistic, cultural and social differentiation. But: “school systems have to take into account the fact, that intercultural innovations without structural reforms to rebalance social differences will remain futile and contradictory”.

The International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) has also put “Interculturality” in a broader context when it defined in the late 1990ies education in general as “a concern of the international community in particular with regard to human rights, equality of opportunity, cultural diversity, i.e. issues of education in multicultural societies”.

Intercultural education would have the following objectives:

- to teach children and young people...how to deal with cultural differences and diversity in society...and to give them the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to acquire this ability (skills in intercultural communication and conflict solving, insight into the working of the multicultural society, analysis of one’s own cultural values, standards and assumptions, etc.)
- to promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, openness to individuals and groups with different cultural, ethnic, national, religious background, etc.
- to combat racism, xenophobia, discrimination, prejudices and stereotypes, etc. and
- to provide teachers...with additional professional skills so that they can work effectively in culturally and ethnically mixed classes and schools.

Particularly related to the European integration process, a document of the University of Ghent from the end of the 1990th interpreted “Intercultural Education” as an appeal

to intensively deal with the democratic principles in education and by that changing traditional attitudes towards foreigners and the foreign. By that “Intercultural Education” became a decisive aspect of “good” education: “Intercultural education goes further than education for migrants or ethnic minorities. Organising teaching programmes and educational facilities which are aimed at their specific learning needs is not generally the job of intercultural education. This also means that the primary objective of intercultural education is not to improve the school’s success with pupils from migrant groups and ethnic minorities. But it is the case that a society which is organised in accordance with the principles of democracy and cultural pluralism should guarantee equal opportunity in education for every individual and every group which forms a part of that society.”

Intercultural Pedagogy

Both the concepts of “Intercultural Education” and of “Intercultural Pedagogy” are closely related to the school systems. It can be regarded as something like a positive variation of the so-called “Pedagogy for Foreigners” which has been the hegemonial approach to address migrants in the schools of the 1970ies and 1980ies. More than “Intercultural Education” it asserts the claim to be seen as scientifically grounded. As theoreticians like Peter Gstettner (Peter Gstettner, Contact and Conflict in the Cultural Movement) formulate, “Intercultural Pedagogy” should be based on an equality of cultures and languages. It should take place in a learning environment that is without competition among the learners but full of curiosity and of mutual enrichment by that enlarging the horizons of living and experiencing.

Related to this highly idealistically loaded approach, Michele Borelli (Michele Borelli, Intercultural Education in Theory and Practice) comes to the conclusion, that “in pedagogy there exist neither natives nor foreigners but people.” While other education scientists see “intercultural Pedagogy” as a necessary complement to antiracist pedagogy, there also opponent positions denouncing these normative approaches simply as “political pedagogy”.

„Intercultural Dialogue“

Overviewing the broad range of often very vague definitions of “Intercultural Education” and “Intercultural Pedagogy” the term “„Intercultural Dialogue“” does not invent something completely new. Instead of that, the idea of “„Intercultural Dialogue“” has been created as another starting point for the recognition of difference and diversity of the world in which the inhabitants of European societies will have to orient. These differences of opinion, viewpoint, and values will exist not only within each individual culture but also between cultures.

‘Dialogue’ seeks to approach these multiple viewpoints with a desire to understand and learn from those that do not see the world in the same way as oneself. An effective ‘dialogue’, therefore, is seen by the advocates of “„Intercultural Dialogue“” as an enriching and opening interaction which encourages the respectful sharing of ideas and an exploration of the different thought-processes through which the world is perceived and understood. This interaction would emphasize opportunities for broadened and deepened self-knowledge and worldview. As a process, “„Intercultural Dialogue“” would encourage an identification of the boundaries that define individuals, and then ask them to relate across those boundaries and even to

call them into question.

As the International Association of Universities (IAU) 2006 pointed out: "In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, where encountering cultural difference can scarcely be avoided, the ability to enter into a tolerant and respectful dialogue is a vital skill for nations, communities, and individuals. In this context, higher education institutions have an important role to play. Disciplines, teaching methods, student skills, and knowledge itself can be deepened and strengthened through an „Intercultural Dialogue“ approach".

(<http://www.unesco.org/iau/id/index.html>)

To summarize an overall aim of „Intercultural Dialogue“ it is unanimously seen as a "method" to enhance

- the building of mutual respect and understanding,
- the exchange of educational approaches and practices regarding political, human rights and cultural education and
- the learning and further development of competences and skills that allow to actively participate in the dialogue between cultures.

What are the main debates taking place. Are there differences in various parts/regions of Europe?

When trying to find the adjective “intercultural” in selected European vocabularies you will experience that this term is not enclosed. This can be considered as evidence that not in each European language “interculturality” is deemed to be an important issue yet.

In contradiction of this linguistic non-existence the term “interkulturell” in the German language became a kind of buzzword during the last few years trying to characterize staff members by their mobility, multilingualism and openness toward the world, necessary for being successful in international businesses.

In recent pedagogic documents the term “intercultural” is mainly used for positive relations between majorities and minorities within the school systems and for describing additional offers for foreign children to be integrated in the national school systems. When it comes to pedagogic intentions of transgression of national or linguistic borders also terms like “European dimension of education”, “Europeisation of the curriculum”, “bilingual classes”, “European diversity” or “multilingualism” are used.

In my interviews with selected experts in the field to prepare this challenge paper I was confronted with the need to differentiate between

- an inter-national
- an inter-cultural and
- an inter-institutional aspect.

Inter-national

The inter-national aspect seems to be the easiest to be assessed. Young people in increasing numbers take advantage of European exchange programs like Erasmus. As a proof the European Union 2006 celebrated one million Erasmus students from 32 countries who took part in the program during the last years. Of course not all European countries are equally in demand when young people take part in student exchange programmes in other European countries.

Inter-cultural

While students can have positive cultural experiences abroad, the aspect of interculturality becomes more explosive within national, regional or communal borders with increasingly mixed composition.

30 years ago migrants so called “Gastarbeiter” were welcomed as mainly manual workers in higher developed economies of Europe to temporarily fill the vacancies on the labour markets. As “extra-territorials” returning sooner or later in their home countries they were considered as irrelevant for the national school systems. Meanwhile these workers and with them their families and descendants became permanent residents. They nowadays represent an increasing part of at least some of the European national societies and claim for equal opportunities and rights.

On the European level it should be taken into account that the migrant population is not evenly distributed. Not all European societies are equally affected by this kind of demographic changes. There also exist considerable differences on city and on rural level.

Concerning the challenges for the school systems it also might make sense to differentiate between working immigrants and asylum seekers concerning their education qualifications.

Inter-institutional

Although it is often systematically neglected in the intercultural discourse we should be aware that also the inter-institutional aspect can be decisive for a succeeding „Intercultural Dialogue“.

In their long history, traditional institutions, is it schools or is it other cultural institutions have developed their own outlook, language, their own terminology and their own organisational logics. Consequently they have lost their ability to find new and appropriate ways of co-operation.

In taking part in preparatory activities of the “European Year of „Intercultural Dialogue“ 2008” it soon became evident for the author that the educational sector has quite another view on the issue than the cultural sector. As a result the representatives of the respective institutions do not understand each other when they pretend to talk about the same issue. This is the more true when they have to find a common language to address new target groups (which migrants definitely are).

If institutions would develop a new sensitivity towards this kind of mutual institutional and professional speechlessness, a new quality of problem solving would become possible: Fe schools feel massively overburdened when they become responsible to solve the whole spectrum of problems that arise from interculturality. Instead of that they would be much more successful in fulfilling their core objectives when they would emerge as open community centres, able and prepared to cooperate with the other institutions and initiatives equally involved in the issue.

This kind of permeability seems to be also of importance when recruitment strategies are concerned: Up to now the migrant part of the national population is highly underrepresented among the staff of educational and cultural institutions throughout Europe.

The main research questions and findings

Pedagogic Impact

In principle there is nothing new about intercultural education and by that about intercultural communication.

Ellen Key has formulated the basic principles to enable a comprehensive personal development of each child according its individual abilities and talents in her book “Century of the Child” at the beginning of the 20th century..

This approach led to concepts of reform pedagogy – quite influential in the first half of the 20th century – fostering independency and self-determination. This includes activity, spontaneity and fantasy of each student and of the group – combined with sensitivity and creativity (with the objective to educate a creative, socially responsible and holistically developed personality).

At least some aspects of reform pedagogy are still on the agenda of European national school systems when there is an increasing need to make use of the potentials of all students (wherever they come from and whatever social, cultural or religious background they carry with them).

The main challenge in this context seems to overcome narrow concepts of the curriculum, to avoid early selection and to enable a holistic learning approach as a true-to-life process, supporting the creative talents of each child. In such teaching and learning settings it soon becomes evident that students with a migrant background do not represent a problem but personify manifold resources like languages, literature, art, religion,... which can be useful to reach educational objectives.

There are documents around supporting these pedagogic paradigm change from homogeneity to individuality: Fe in the “General Education Aims of the Austrian Primary Schools” it is formulated that “young people should be led to independent judgement and social understanding, open-minded toward other political and ideological thinking and able to fully participate in the economic, social and cultural life of Austria, Europe and the world.”

The following basic principles that connect reform oriented and intercultural pedagogical approaches can be mentioned:

- Holistic teaching and education
- Individualisation of learning processes
- Learning on ones own in a didactic environment
- Plurality of offers as a prerequisite of finding an individual learning path
- Opening of the schools towards the community and vice versa
- Overcoming traditional social barriers by establishing an integrative school environment
- Overcoming “objective” assessment strategies by “subjective” form in which the learning can play an active role in representing his or her performances.

By the way: If we take “individuality” as a pedagogical priority in school we can’t adopt it just for native students. Consequently we have to forget about the hope to describe “migrants” as an entity. Instead of that we should approve the individuality of each migrant the starting point of integration in and out of school.

Economic Impact

The problem of necessary changes in the pedagogic mainstream of the European school systems does not only have a historic dimension but also an economic one:

In this context, the OECD 2003 assigned – in the framework of PISA – a separate appraisal to produce evidence on the ability of national school systems to integrate youngsters with migration background. Under the title: “Where immigrant students succeed – A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA” the research came to the conclusion, that migrant students are massively discriminated against in being successful in school. This tendency even aggravates when the social background of the migrant students is taken into account (in most European countries immigrant students come from lower level socio-economic backgrounds and their parents often are less educated than native students’ parents).

The executive summary of this PISA-research pinpoints that

- high levels of immigration do not necessarily impair integration,
- Immigrant students are motivated learners and have positive attitudes towards school. Such strong learning dispositions can be developed by schools to help these students in the education system.
- Despite these strong learning dispositions immigrant students often perform at levels significantly lower than their native peers. However, performance levels vary across countries.
- In the majority of countries at least 25% of immigrant students could face considerable challenges in their future professional and personal lives as they do not demonstrate basic mathematics skills in the PISA assessment.
- Policies to help immigrant students attain proficiency in the language of instruction have common characteristics but vary in terms of explicit curricula and focus.
- Only very few countries generally offer supplementary classes in their schools to improve students’ native language.

National, regional or local policy solutions which could be considered as innovative approaches to address these challenges (or failing to do so)

Up to now a lot of ad-hoc-projects on national, regional or local level can be experienced. But the non-existence of convincing and mandatory political strategies is a fragile starting point for sustainable structures fostering „Intercultural Dialogue“ in education.

In most of the European countries the proportion of migrant students suffering from social problems is above average. Albeit their individual learning capacities they are concentrated in schools in which the chances of social and professional advancement are extremely low.

As an immediate result the proportion of migrant students in secondary schools is below average and even smaller on university level. Due to these evidences members of the migrant population cannot be found in the management of educational and cultural institutions – maybe the most important reasons, why the discourse on interculturality is widely dominated by natives.

For quite a long time „Intercultural Dialogue“ was restricted to the need of the migrant students to learn the language of the hosting majority.

As an example of this linguistically driven approach I would like to mention the so-called „Viennese Model“.

Its main elements are

- fostering language training for students with non German mother tongue
- accompanying teacher
- integrative care for foreign children
- care for children who come in through the back door („Seiteneinsteiger“, with no knowledge of the German language)
- bilingual alphabetisation
- curriculum in the mother tongue

As an example that reaches beyond the ability to learn the language of the host country and looks at interculturality in a much broader sense I would like to mention the program „Creative Partnerships“ led by the English Arts Council.

Fostering co-operative activities of schools with cultural institutions it is mainly dedicated to students in deprived social areas with an above average proportion of migrant population (www.creative-partnership.com).

The innovative character might arise from the sheer amount of public money that is dedicated for this program. Meanwhile more than 1/3 of all schools of England are participating. The program is also accompanied by manifold teacher training and evaluation programs to give evidence of the sustainable impact of the program.

Future developments and challenges as perceived by the advisor

Changing demographic composition

Today Western and Central Europe is home or host to some 42 million international migrants, representing about 8, 9% of its total population. In contrast to these demographic realities, many Europeans still do not see their homelands as destination for immigration, nor do they assume that immigration could turn into a permanent and possibly necessary and managed process.

Following the convincing arguments of demographic research and against a widely dominant populist political rhetoric European citizens will have to accept the fact that Europe has become a continent of migration. More than that: All forecasts agree in the assumption that the economic success of Europe has become highly dependent on migration and so on the ability to make the best possible use of the newcomers.

The dimension of migration will differ from country to country but altogether the number of people changing their residency within Europe and arriving from out of Europe not only as tourists will steadily increase.

In terms of education this means a considerable challenge for the national school systems. A special treatment of students with migrant background and by that the idea of extra special pedagogy for migrants will not be a sufficient answer. Instead of hopes to keep the problem on the margins the aspect of migration and integration will become a "leitmotiv" in a comprehensive school reform influencing all parts of the school organisation as well as the school curricula.

How to learn to live "co-otherness"

This reform will have to give up the idea of educating in and for one dominant culture. What has to be learned is to resist the seduction of one – quasi natural – cultural identity. Instead of that the most important criterion to measure the quality of schools will be the ability of the students to develop a multiple identity. And it will be this multiple identity which will decide upon the ability to communicate with others whatever cultural background they represent.

There are already many examples of projects with the intention to learn "co-otherness" (a term that was used by some of my conversation partners) around, practicing integration as a cross-curricular issue in connection with social learning and civic education.

But a lot of problems still have to be addressed if not only individual projects but structural solutions should be found:

- *Gender*: Girls with a migration background are differently affected than boys. The problem is not just about allowing wearing scarves or not. It is also about language or role attribution in families and among friends. Altogether their potential multilingualism and their affinity to education should be seen as a resource.

- *Religion*: The problem of integration is often narrowly connected with religious aspects. But how to deal with religion in school? According to the secular character of the European societies for most of the native youngsters in Europe religion is not an important issue. As a consequence an exchange about religious attitudes does not take place.
- *Language*: Learning the language of the host country is commonly seen as the most important prerequisite of successful integration. Also in school migrant students have to learn first of all the language of the majority to follow the curriculum. By that the ability to speak a mother tongue (which has no relevance in school) tends to result in a disadvantage and not in an asset. This goes together with ignorance of the majority of teachers not able to speak and by that appreciate at least one of the languages of their migrant students. (In this context the president of the board of education in Vienna formulated: "Monolingualism can be healed")
- *The role of the arts*: The existing dominance of the language of the native speakers is a considerable obstacle for migrants to express themselves adequately. In this respect the use of other languages like painting, performing, making music, dancing ("body languages") can help to integrate students with language problems. There is a lot of evidence that the use of artistic languages lead to changes in the social standing of migrant students in classes.
- *Teachers*: Most of the teachers are not systematically trained in fostering „Intercultural Dialogue“. They are often part of the problem when they are hardening the reproduction of stereotypes in schools concerning pretended deficits of migrant students. Instead of this kind of selective approach teachers will have to be equipped with methods to make use of the resources of the migrants.
- *Administration*: Up to now the migrant population is hardly represented in the management of the education (and also of the cultural) institutions. And also the provenance of the teachers considerably differs increasingly from the provenance of the students. To avoid this structural disparity in some European countries quotas have been implemented.
- *Co-operation*: Schools educating students with different social, religious, linguistic and cultural background cannot solve all respective problems themselves. In enhancing their profile as open community centres they could take advantage of their rich cultural resources and find new ways of co-operation with out of school institutions. Speaking generally: There will be no „Intercultural Dialogue“ in schools when the relations with other policy fields (and their institutions) are neglected

Conclusions, recommendations for the EU Year of „Intercultural Dialogue“ and potential EU programmes can be added if applicable

European live in hybrid cultures that are not limited by national borders

In many European documents the importance of European culture is characterized by its diversity and its common heritage. At the same time both policy fields “culture” and “education” are still in the authority of the nation states suggesting that there still is something like a national or regional cultural or even educational identity.

In this programmatic context the issue of „Intercultural Dialogue“ on European level would have to overcome these traditional views of national or regional cultural purity and homogeneity. The rapidly changing composition of the European societies is producing hybrid cultural contexts. This symbolic expression of transnational lifestyles is the result of dynamic processes beyond political strategies to reassure the anxious part of the native population by traditional concepts of national cultural identity.

The idea of homogeneity for long time seen as a constituency of traditional culture hides the fact that problems between cultural attitudes are first and foremost social problems. The public debate on the existence/re-appearance of a so-called “underclass” (“Unterschicht”) started simultaneously with political challenge of migration in Germany. The conclusion: There will be no solution to improve “„Intercultural Dialogue“” without taking into account the social, economic and political dimension of this issue.

Enforcing “„Intercultural Dialogue“” means changing attitudes of all dialogue partners

As more and more Europeans get involved in these hybrid and dynamic cultural contexts not only the migrant part of society is afflicted. “„Intercultural Dialogue“” is about the ability to change attitudes of all people involved in a communication that is not selective but integrative.

Because of the same reason “„Intercultural Dialogue“” cannot be restricted to solving a linguistic problem by making a minority speaking the language of the majority. The successes of bi-lingual schools show that the monolingual habit of multilingual schools (Ingrid Gogolin) is an obsolescent model.

Some practical proposals

- Supporting schools to further develop their profiles as community centres
- Supporting the organisation of all-day-schools (which gives students with different cultural backgrounds the necessary time to get in a mutually enriching dialogue)
- Supporting co-operation of schools with out of school institutions (Fe to find new ways of communication with migrant parents) and to make use of the services of other social institutions (psychological and social services, housing, labour market,....)
- Supporting the development of curricula with a concrete European dimension
- Supporting didactic contextualisation of representations of cultural heritage (that represents communality but also conflicts)
- Supporting cultural and arts education as a core issue in the school curriculum
- Supporting didactic approaches to negotiate the issue of religion in a reflective way
- Supporting teaching and learning settings in which migrant students can bring in their cultural resources
- Supporting teaching and learning settings that are appropriate for female migrant students
- Supporting the production of bilingual school books (to be used not only in one country)
- Supporting the production of European school books (Fe in history,...)
- Fostering the use of new technologies in school for intercultural communication (Web 2.0.; Blogs,...)
- Fostering trans-national co-operation of schools close to the border (Fe Slovenia, Italy and Austria,...) to work off historic conflicts
- Fostering training of intercultural competencies of teachers
- Fostering language training of teachers
- Forstering training of teachers to make use of the "Intercultural Development Inventory" (IDI)
- Fostering life-long-learning for hard-to-reach-learners

