

Intercultural curriculum in neo-nationalist Europe

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Introduction

“In comparison to their peers, many of the children coming from migrant backgrounds¹ have lower levels of school performance. There are fewer migrant children enrolling in pre-primary and higher education. Furthermore, the share of early school leavers is much higher among these children. In some countries, these issues have worsened from the first to second generation migrants, indicating that education systems are failing to promote integration.” This statement, quoted from the *Green Paper – Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems – SEC(2008) 2173-2*, is confirmed by numerous studies conducted in each European country, as by the “Programme for International Students Assessment” (PISA), which makes evaluations for all EU member states. Two reports are especially meaningful: the *PISA 2009 Results: Learning Outcomes of Students with an Immigrant Background* (OECD, 2010) and *Untapped Skills. Realising the potential of immigrant children* (OECD, 2012)³.

All these studies agree on the fact that the causes of this phenomenon (underperforming of children from immigrant background) cannot be attributed to children’s individual characteristics; on the contrary, it results from a range and combination of factors, which are mainly the consequence of the educational system characteristics and of the educational policies implemented by the countries of destination. Important factors are the degree of differentiation and the degree of standardization (which play an important role as well in relationship to class differences). Taking into account cultural differences requires, however, specific measures, which can be defined as “multicultural” or “intercultural” education. As the MIPEX Report 2011 – a tool to measure

¹ For the purpose of this Green Paper, the term “children from a migrant background” refers to all persons who are living in an EU Member State other than the one where they were born. This includes EU citizens as well as third-country nationals.

² The Green paper was presented On 3 July 2008 by the Education Committee of the European Commission.

³ “Performance and Engagement of Immigrant Students in PISA 2003” (OECD 2006) and on “School Factors Related to Quality and Equity” (OECD 2003).

immigrants' integration in the European countries-states⁴: *"Few education systems in Europe are adapting to the realities of immigration."*⁵ The same point of view is shared by ENAR⁶: *"Lack of provision of appropriate education that accommodates language, culture, religion or is intercultural is of grave concern."*

The scarce presence of intercultural education and the absence of full intercultural curricula are considered one of main weak points in the European education systems as far as the policies that could positively influence the educational performance of pupils from immigrant background, are concerned (MIPEX, 2011, ENAR, 2008): *"Education curriculum that does not reflect diverse societies and contains only the version of history promoted by the majority population or references biased against some ethnic groups and promoting intolerance remains a serious concern. Limitations in the curriculum can contribute to low school attendance and achievement; lack of intercultural educational activities and programmes providing emotional support and emancipation can hinder in particular the ability of refugee children to integrate in a new educational environment."* (ENAR, 2008).

Intercultural education is not an unknown topic in Europe. Since 1977, the Council of Europe has elaborated an European model of intercultural curriculum as various publications (see Micheline Rey, 1986⁷, Leclercq 2002) underline: *"It was the project on 'Education and cultural developments of migrants', launched in 1981, that was to afford the opportunity for systematically researching the concept of intercultural education and revealing all that it signified at the intellectual level and in teaching practice."* (Leclercq 2002:2). The Council of Europe had certainly a pioneer role of in the promotion of intercultural education in Europe. The pedagogical proposal raised, however, great interest among scholars and teachers during the eighties and nineties. A rich debate followed, the outcome of which was the idea that intercultural education had to be promoted for all pupils, not only for children of immigrant background. While the debate on intercultural education was extremely lively, the European national governments never promoted general policies of multiculturalism; on the contrary, critics to multiculturalism multiplied over the years, until a neo-assimilationist approach was supported practically by

⁴ Migrant Integration Policy Index [MIPEX]. This index takes into account over a hundred policy indicators in order to influence to what extent immigrants profit from policies on long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination, family reunion, political participation, and labour market access.

⁵ MIPEX points out the fact that this failure in Europe is more pronounced than in North America. In fact, according to the MIPEX, the most engaged education systems are in North America, while in Europe, they can be found in the Nordics and the Benelux.

⁶ ENAR European Network against racism, General Policy Paper No. 5: *Fighting Racism and Promoting Equal Rights in Education and Training*, November 2008 <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/GPP%20No%205%20Education%20-%20EN%20final%20&%20adopted.pdf>

⁷ i.e. *Training teachers in intercultural education?: the work of the Council for Cultural Cooperation (1977-83)* by Micheline Rey.

all the European countries. These neo-assimilationist integration policies affected as well the pedagogical debate and practices. Nowadays, explicit intercultural curricula, but also curricula reflecting diverse societies, are not part of the mainstream European education systems and are, at the most, relegated as complementary activities or compensatory education. Teachers have lost interest in this topic. The attack to multiculturalism done by the European governments has succeeded. The paper will analyse the European debate on intercultural education, the decline of multiculturalism and the present neo-nationalism trend that is deeply affecting the education systems.

Multiculturalism and intercultural education in Europe

The idea of multiculturalism was developed outside Europe – in the USA and, especially, in Canada – during the sixties and seventies, but it found some support in Europe, among scholars, stakeholders and politicians, as the best model to guarantee a certain level of social inclusion for immigrant populations. The challenge of multiculturalism laid in the fact that it conceived society as composed of a variety of independent entities (i.e. cultural or ethnic groups), who were to be given the same rights. The European version of multiculturalism never aimed to change the state structure or Constitution (as it was the case in Canada): it was mainly seen as an instrument to integrate immigrants. That's why, in Europe, education was seen as playing an important role for implementing multiculturalism. As Steven Castles wrote: “[M]ulticulturalism is understood as a public policy, it has two key dimensions: recognition of cultural diversity and social equality for members of minorities. Clearly education has a central role to play in both. With regard to the first aspect, multicultural education is based on the idea that children come from diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds and that this diversity should be respected and maintained. This means building diversity into the curriculum, classroom practice, and the organization of the school – for instance recognizing customs with regard to dress, food, and religious observance.” (Castles 2004:37) In line with Castles, Gutmann (2004) claims that “[m]ulticultural education in democracies can help further civic equality in two importantly different ways: first, by expressing the democratic value of tolerating cultural differences that are consistent with civic equality, and second, by recognizing the role that cultural differences have played in shaping society and the world in which the children live.” (Gutmann 2004:71) In the European context, multiculturalism was, in fact, mainly debated in the field of education.

The Council of Europe adopted the strategy of multiculturalism and multicultural pedagogy in the 1970s, addressing the ‘problems’ relating to the education of migrant workers, as well as the possibility of maintaining one’s links with languages and countries of origin. “*Stimulated by the Council of Cultural Cooperation (CDCC), a working group was set up between Louis Porcher and Micheline Rey. Its aim was to examine teacher education in Europe with respect to methods and strategies. This framework was underpinned by the*

recognition of the necessity to implement 'intercultural education'. (...) Since the mid-1980s the Council of Europe⁸ has begun to promote numerous projects for education, which is no longer seen as multi- or trans-cultural, but instead as 'intercultural' (see Rey 1986)" (Portera, 2008: 483).

While some scholars consider that "multicultural" and "intercultural" education are used interchangeably, others insist on the differences. According to Gundara (2000), the term "multicultural" is used by English speaking European researchers while the term "intercultural" is used by non-English speaking researchers, whereas May (1999) states that there is a conceptual rather than a geographic difference between the two terms: "*Here 'multicultural' would describe the nature of the society while 'intercultural' describes interactions, negotiations and processes*". Therefore, the term "multicultural" is to be read as multiple ethnic and religious cultures in schools, cultures that differ from another cluster of cultures that are regarded as "native". According to Favaro/Luatti (2004) the approach of multicultural education is limited in its understanding of the current change and does not represent a comprehensive view, as it does not take into account the changes in European societies that are not related to the migration movements or the presence of immigrants but arise from a general increase of cultural diversity. The concept of "intercultural education" on the other hand would assume "*a vision of culture and social life, which puts at the centre not the criteria of belonging, place and soil. of the Tradition (with big T), but the ones of tolerance, dialogue, reason as critique of any prejudice*" (Cambi, 2001:15).

Building diversity into the curriculum

The differences in the underlying theoretic approaches to multicultural and intercultural education regard not least the educational strategies how to deal with immigrant/foreign culture students. Principally intercultural and multicultural education share the same aims; the basic idea is "*that children come from diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds and that this diversity should be respected and maintained. This means building diversity into the curriculum, classroom practice, and the organization of the school – for instance recognizing customs with regard to dress, food, and religious observance*" (Castles 2004:37). However, what exactly "building diversity into the

⁸ Since the turn of the century the Council of Europe tries to push the issue of religious diversity as an important part of intercultural education. The COE's Steering Committee on Education (CD-ED) launched a new project under the title "New Challenge of Intercultural Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe" in 2002 with the aim "*to make intercultural and interfaith dialogue one of the major axes of the Council of Europe's development. The project aims to raise the awareness of decision-makers, educators and teachers about the implications of the religious dimension of intercultural education. It also seeks to draw their attention to examples of positive experiences and of new methods and approaches in intercultural education in general, in both curricular and extra-curricular activities*" (COE website 22.2.2007).

curriculum” means, is indeed a contested issue. The differences between multicultural and intercultural education appear precisely in this respect (“building diversity into the curriculum”).

In his review of thirty years of intercultural education, Leclercq (2002) points out: “*It should (...) be observed that these indications [on main aspects of intercultural education given by the Council of Europe] do not make it possible to define the content of intercultural education very precisely. Only in the area of modern language study, no doubt, does the presentation of the Threshold Levels indicate with some clarity what vocabulary and structures should be taught. [...] That is why intercultural education is not so much a matter of teaching something different, but more of teaching differently with the existing curricula. Here again, the example of the European dimension is highly significant. A Resolution passed by the Ministers in 1997 took care to make it clear that the upshot of intercultural education should not be the creation of a new subject, but greater use of cross-disciplinary methods and team teaching.*” (Leclercq 2002:3). He adds: “*Intercultural education is thus meant to be guided essentially by approaches that enable it to achieve its goal, namely to incorporate all pupils into the plural society where they dwell and lead their lives, by giving them a new idea of history, geography, language, culture, philosophy, humanity and society*” (Leclercq 2002:4).

In line with Leclercq, Driessen (2002), analysing the Dutch Model of “Intercultural Education”, points out that it is more than anything a “*container concept: it is generally not very clear just what it stands for.*” (Driessen 2002:62). Accordingly, the concept was born out of political considerations, as the “*Dutch government at that time saw ICE as an important means of giving effect to acculturation, i.e. a two-way and multi-faceted process of getting to know each other, accepting and appreciating each other and opening oneself up to each other’s cultures or the elements of those cultures. The government started out from the assumption that the children grow up in a multicultural society. That was something that needed to be expressed in all school subjects that were suitable for this. It would, however, not have to be something to which only isolated attention was paid, but something that was going to serve as a starting point for all subjects*” (Driessen 2002:62,63).

This progressive process of suppressing any “culturalism” or cultural reference in intercultural education represents as well a shift from the initial field of application (dealing with children of immigrant origin) to the general school context; from a mode of management of cultural diversity in the classroom to the fact of taking “*proper account of personal difference and thereby to combat discrimination.*” (Leclercq 2002:4). Even one of the pioneer of intercultural education, director of a journal having the same name (Intercultural education), Batelaan refocuses the approach in 2003. He suggests that the term “intercultural education” covers two characteristics of education that are appropriate in democratic multicultural societies: (1) “inclusion and participation”, on the one hand, and (2) “learning to live together”, on the other hand: “*The challenge for the professionals (teachers, school leaders) is*

to ensure that each individual gets the opportunity to learn what she/he has to and wants to learn in order to be able to participate in the economic, cultural, social and political realms of the society. In other words: education should contribute to a policy of inclusion [...]. At the classroom level, equity refers to equal access to interaction in the learning process and to the materials available in the classroom. Providing this access is one of the main responsibilities of the teacher” (Batelaan 2003:3).

It is interesting to notice how the approach that tends to neglect the cultural contents in intercultural education is very different from the one of some American scholars, working on multiculturalism, as Christine Sleeter. In her effort to systematize different attempts to “un-standardize curriculum” via “multicultural education”, Sleeter (2005) points out that the main challenge lies in the question, “*how we can live together in ways that are mutually satisfying and which leave our differences, both individual and group, intact and our multiple identities recognized*”. Sleeter states that “*the main problem is learning to value points of view and accumulated knowledge that is not dominant and has been routinely excluded from the mainstream*” (Sleeter 2005:5). Sleeter then questions the role of standardization as a tool for overcoming inequalities and characterizes a standardized curriculum as the institutionalization of a “single definition” of a well-educated person, when what we need in a democracy that faces immense challenges and cultural diversities is a “*marketplace of ideas and a diversity of perspectives*” (Sleeter 2005:49): “*Diverse funds of knowledge means that everyone does not learn the same things. Allowing for development of diversity in expertise can serve as an intellectual resource for constructive participation in a multicultural democracy and a diverse world*” (Sleeter 2005:7). The idea of enriching and widening, thus un-standardizing, the existing curriculum is paramount in the multicultural approach.

The theoretical debate has, afterwards, to be translated into practices, then have to be applied in the schools; or, in this respect, the information is, unfortunately, missing. As a general outlook on schooling strategies in Western European countries, Luciak (2004) concludes that there “*are reports about new regulations, which ask for the application of intercultural principles in schools, for the development of multicultural teaching materials, as well as a for a variety of educational projects related to intercultural education. In the absence of evaluations of the effectiveness of these new models of instruction, there is [however] still little insight into how schools are putting the principles of interculturalism into practice*” (Luciak 2004:95).

The failure in introducing a multicultural or intercultural curriculum implies – de facto – that “nationalist” curricula are still predominant in the European schools. In order to understand the issues linked to intercultural curriculum, it should be reminded that the European schools have been institutionalized in the Nineteenth century together with the structuring of the Nation-state. Louis Althusser defines schools as “Ideological State

Apparatuses”⁹. Curricula have been the expression of this nationalist ideology aimed to form good patriots ready to kill the neighbours in order to protect the borders. The result of this type of education, which has no equivalent in the history of mankind – education having mostly being an instrument for developing universalistic ideas¹⁰ –, was the training of Europeans to mass murder during the First and the Second World War. The nationalist curriculum is embedded in all the disciplines: history is only the history of the nation-state (the other nation-state being often presented as enemies); the literature focuses the national literature; even in sciences the “national” scientists are put in advance... Moreover, the national curriculum is fed with activities (like singing patriotic songs, celebrating patriotic feasts, etc...) that reinforce the national belonging and the hostility towards the others. In spite of the rejection of extreme nationalism after World War two, this main nationalist approach has continued in the European schools. Of course each European country presents some specificity... German nationalism has been certainly the most extreme (provoking the European catastrophe twice). Spain is a different case, the Spanish nationalism being challenged by the ethno-nationalisms of the Basque country and Catalonia. With neo-nationalism making now a spectacular coming back, fuelled by the economic crisis, European schools are abandoning any will to reforme the curricula towards a less nationalistic approach.

⁹ Althusser, L. (1970), “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (1971), translated by Ben Brewster, pp. 121–76. ISBN 902308-89-0. Available online here [4] and here [5]

¹⁰ During the Middle Ages, University education was aimed to foster the communication inside the Christian world, overcoming the existing differences among groups – the borderline being the heresy not the ethnicity. The Universities were independent from the Kings’ power and offered an universalistic knowledge (through the Latin as *lingua franca*). As for what concerned the merchants and craftsmen’s education in the state cities, it gave children at the same time the necessary instruments to live among the countrymen, following the rules, and to deal properly with the aliens with whom it was necessary to have contacts for exchanging goods (and information). The education of the merchants of Florence and Venice balanced the adaptation to the local society and the necessary skills to understand the others who were potentially trade partners (the “others” might eventually be enemies, but the hostility developed around specific interests and could rapidly shift; the others were not the “absolute” enemies – at least inside the Christian world. To give an example, the four Sea Italian republics – Amalfi, Genova, Pisa and Venice, they were often making wars, but the alliances among them were shifting all the time. In the merchants’ cities, the relatively open attitude towards the otherness, influenced as well the relations with the non-Christian world: Marco Polo fully admires the non-Western societies he gets in contact with during its trip in Asia; Dante Alighieri places the muslim Saladin in a sort of Paradise and places the prophet Mohammed in Hell because he cheated people as fake prophet (he is in good company with quite a few popes and other Christian preachers, by the way); the poets Matteo Maria Boiardo and Ludovico Ariosto who wrote about the Charlemagne wars against the Moors were both fascinated by the charme of the Muslim women and the braveness of the Muslim warriors. Ariosto insists on the fact that there was a lot of mutual respect between the Christian and Muslim knights.

Nationalist curriculum is based on an epistemology that was elaborated during the Nineteenth century and that has taken the place of the metaphysical worldview of the Ancient Regime and of the universalistic approach of the Enlightenment. The industrial revolution and the development of capitalism have produced what Isidoro Moreno (2012) calls the “industrial-extractive paradigm” that has submitted to production any human activity. At the same time, the interpretation of the social relations through a biological approach, suggested by a misinterpretation of Darwinist evolution theory has established a hierarchization of cultures in an evolutionary scale and, at the end, legitimized a racist thought. The existing difficulties to eliminate racism in Europe, which blooms again and again as a structural character of the European societies, even after the unthinkable of the Shoah, indicates the existence of an epistemology that is deeply rooted in the worldview that Europe has expressed and that goes far beyond the ethnocentrism that characterizes any human societies – as the anthropology teaches.

More over, the neo-liberal ideology that has been developed since the eighties, is, in fact, a combination of the industrial-extractive paradigm with the social Darwinism that submits human beings to a pretended economic rationality based on competition, condemning to the insignificance the weak ones, the ones that are not fit to competition – as, in the recent past, the inferior races¹¹. The neo-liberal ideology is, in Europe, combined with the triumph of an oligarchical elitist thought that is suspicious towards democracy. This ideology can bring the world to the catastrophe, because it has no chance of succeeding in the answers to the ecological challenge (as global warming). The industrial – extractive paradigm, combined with the competitive approach cannot solve problems that need community versus competitive practices, the centrality of common goods, and gifts as a basis of the giving-receiving-exchanging trilogy. According to Moreno (2012) this alternative worldview finds references in non-Western “cosmovisions”, such as the ones expressed by indigenous movements in Latin America, where the concept of the good living (“buen vivir”) and the rights of nature have been enshrined in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia.

The decline of multiculturalism in Europe

The debate on intercultural education knew a clear decline in the last fifteen-twenty years, in correspondence with the growing critics to multiculturalism as a model for integration of the immigrants. These critics were twofold: one came from the educationalists, who underlined the importance of the class issues; another one came from politicians and various conservative forces in a coming back of nationalism and assimilationist policies. The first critics were especially strong in France: contrasting two researches on the

¹¹ See Z. Baumann (2004), *Wasted lives. Modernity and its Outcasts*, Cambridge, Polity

reasons for underachievement of minority ethnic children in France and the UK, Raveaud (2003) observes that according to the British researchers, social class only accounts for part of educational inequality. The rest is explained by ethnic belonging (the causal effect being attributed to institutional factors, not to any intrinsic ethnic characteristics). On the contrary, the French authors underline, that underachievement is not specifically due to being foreign or from an immigrant family. Indeed, it disappears when the analysis allows for the influence of social and family characteristics. Raveaud concludes: *“It may of course be the case that the reality of the link between ethnicity and educational attainment is of a different nature either side of the Channel, in particular because of the institutional treatment of the immigrant and ethnic minority population. But one may also wonder how far the objects and methods of research, as well as the interpretations of the data, are mediated through researchers’ beliefs and values, in this case the Republican refusal to recognise ethnicity. While French findings tend to shift the focus away from the country of origin so much so as to make it ‘disappear’, ethnic differences are reified in British research. British research and policy constructs ethnic difference, whereas French Republican traditions contribute to the deconstruction of what they consider to be a social artefact”* (Raveaud 2003:6).

Similar conclusions came from a half political-half academic body in the Netherlands: the Dutch “Committee for Non-indigenous Pupils in Education” (CALO) when referring to the same aspect: *“This committee concluded that too much of a link had been made in the policies pursued up to that time between disadvantage and ethnicity. The poor educational position of the minorities was purely the result of their unfavourable socio-economic background and their poor command of the Dutch language; the ethnic-cultural identity would not play a role in this. This identity, which is negatively appreciated in the compensatory policy, should, out of cultural and political considerations, in fact be positively appreciated”* (Driessen 2002:65).

While several politicians expressed themselves against multiculturalism, the positive vision of intercultural education was also challenged by scholars, according to whom, multiculturalism may lead to a re-enforcement of ethnic, particular identities, instead of promoting interaction and mutuality in the process of integration. On the contrary, in the integration process, the focus shouldn’t be put on differences but on commonality, comprising a society built on shared values and a common culture. This approach was always privileged in the French model to integrate immigrants with the accent on universalism, a tendency to deny difference, and the aim to include immigrant students as individual citizen regardless of their origin and cultural background and the British experience with its accent on group rights, multiculturalism and anti-racism. Or, even in the UK, in February 2011, the prime Minister David Cameron has strongly attacked “state multiculturalism”, accusing it to produce the insularity of Muslim communities that can foster terrorism. “Britain, the prime minister said, has “encouraged different cultures to live separate lives” with the effect of “weakening our collective identity”. This has

contributed to a disorientation among young Muslims that makes them susceptible to extremist preachers. The antidote, according to Mr Cameron, is a more consistent, robust promotion of liberal-democratic values – human rights, religious tolerance, gender equality – and a greater emphasis on shared British cultural attributes. He calls it “active, muscular liberalism”¹² (Editorial The Observer, Sunday 6 February 2011).

Referring to the examples of Germany and France, Brubaker (2001) states a decline of multiculturalism and a revitalization of the assimilation’s discourse and practice, although pointing out, that it is rather the term than the concept that returned. The new understanding of assimilation is defined as an orientation of individual and collective behaviour towards institutionalized expectations, which, by authors like Brubaker, are held to be compulsive for all members of a given society. At the basis of the neo-assimilationist discourse, there is the idea of citizenship: “*The new practices, policies, and discourses surrounding citizenship are for assimilation, rather, in the sense of politically recognizing, legally constituting, and symbolically emphasizing commonality rather than difference.*” (Brubaker 2001:539).

As a matter of fact, multiculturalism has never been accepted in Germany. Since, after World War 2, Germany became an immigration country, the model used to manage migratory flows was the *Gastarbeiter* system (guest workers discouraged to settle), justified by the discourse that Germany is no immigration country. The fact that immigrants still settled, is another story: social and historical processes rarely follow the models imposed by the ideologies. Consequently, the declaration of Angela Merkel in October 2012 about the failure of multiculturalism at a meeting of young members of her Christian Democratic Party in Potsdam (“This [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed,”)¹³ is somehow surprising. How can multiculturalism fail in a country where it was never implemented? What did, in fact, fail? Wasn’t it, by chance, the capacity of the German society to adapt to the realities of immigration or, maybe, more in general to the realities of a diverse, global world¹⁴?

¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/06/observer-editorial-multiculturalism-david-cameron>

¹³ Matthew Weaver, Angela Merkel: German multiculturalism has ‘utterly failed’. Chancellor’s assertion that onus is on new arrivals to do more to integrate into German society stirs anti-immigration debate, Guardian, 17 October 2010
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed>

¹⁴ Evens, S. (2010) Germany’s charged immigration debate: “In the blunter pages of populist newspapers, the image is one of a country being taken over by an alien culture. Europe’s most popular newspaper, Bild, talks of the “insanity” of multiculturalism. It splashes pictures of a block of flats where the landlord insists that tenants conform to sharia law by not letting to anyone who has anything to do with alcohol and pork. Opinion polls suggest many Germans agree with Bild. A recent one showed 55% thinking that Muslims were a burden on the economy.

”BBC News, Berlin <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11532699>

In France multiculturalism was largely rejected because of the “republican” approach based on the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and on human rights. Historically, fears of society fragmenting into ethnic or religious communities have influenced education policy in France where “the basis of state education [...] is initiation into a common culture through a single curriculum” (Osler & Starkey; 2001:290). The republican approach focuses on individuals/citizens as members of the French Republic. In fact, the issue of the relationship between individuals and the ethnic community represents a critical point in respect to multiculturalism, while it can bring to interesting outcomes as extending the definition of difference. For example, Batelaan (2003) underlines that “[d]ealing with diversity is not confined to different cultural backgrounds, but to all aspects of an individual: including gender, talents, interests, skills and knowledge, etc. It would be an artificial exercise to separate cultural differences from other differences [...] in teaching respect” (Batelaan 2003:4).

In Europe, the debate on multiculturalism has highlighted a genuine tension between universalistic approaches, aiming at a common polity based on shared values, and particularistic concepts that underline the right to differ. The right to differ tends to focus the individual rather than the community. This tension is reflected as well in the educational strategies aiming at the integration of immigrant children in European schools. The complex interaction between individual and an ethnic community can also represent an interesting approach towards interculturalism, as Fisher and Fisher suggests: “...interculturalism in a certain sense represents a third way (between assimilation and multiculturalism), which leads to the active and positive acceptance of diversity and mestizo. [...] It is not right to define the others following common characteristics of some cultural category (stranger, white, Muslim): on the contrary it is necessary to respect and acknowledge the other as contemporaneously singular and universal” (Fischer/Fischer 2002:13). Unfortunately, the potential that some critics of multiculturalism represented (namely a critical idea of interculturalism) has not been practically developed in the education strategies in the European countries. On the contrary, because of the political context, intercultural education has been abandoned and neo-assimilationist approaches, in which the aim of preservation of difference (be it group – or individual, cultural, ethnic or religious) does not play a major role, have prevailed. A comprehensive European report on “The Integration of Immigrant Children Into Schools in Europe” (EURYDICE 2004) states that the “[e]valuation of support measures for immigrant children or of implementation of the intercultural approach in education is not a widespread practice in Europe [...]. Where it does occur, this is often solely as a contribution to fighting school failure” (EURYDICE 2004:71).

The press campaigns that have taken place in Germany against the Greeks and Southern Europeans in general show that the problem – in relationship with producing stereotypes and prejudices against the others – is embedded deeply in the German society. These campaigns are shocking in respect to any perspective of building an European Union.

Intercultural Education and Citizenship Education

The aforementioned critics to multiculturalism in several European countries had a crucial impact on educational policies. In the context of debates on the integration of immigrants, schools have been designed as national institutions, which are involved in creating a common culture and shared values. Among these shared values, the issue of democratic participation has become crucial. Similar to the controversy on assimilation vs. recognition and preservation of difference, a debate on immersive citizenship vs. intercultural education emerged.

While the intercultural approach on schooling strategies has seen a decline, an important strand of the debate on the integration of immigrant children's presence in European classrooms has focused on the process of "citizen-building" under the label of citizenship education. In particular in the European context, citizenship education as education for democracy is considered to play a vital role in the development of European unity, mutual understanding and building a "European" identity among its people. European education to civic coexistence is somehow similar to the "education to citizenship", which has been promoted in multicultural countries like Canada. Nevertheless, in countries that have a multicultural policies, like Canada, citizenship education promotes the "societal culture", theorized by Will Kymlicka, respecting the cultural and religious differences, while in Europe, the idea of social cohesion is linked strongly to the sense of national identity. Citizenship education is, in fact, intended to help integrate (or better assimilate) a diverse population into a single national culture.

As regards the implementation of citizenship education, Wylie (2004) remarks: "*Within citizenship education, the particular emphasis given to social inclusion or diversity varies from country to country. In some countries such as France, a common curriculum is clearly seen as a means of initiating children into a common culture and national identity.*" Fullinwider (1996) however criticises the theoretic focus of the approach, pointing out that although in theory directed towards all citizens/members of a given society and aiming at a dialogue on values to be shared, citizenship education is not the substitution of intercultural education to civic education, embracing universal human values; it is a reinforcement of mono-culturalism, including in its regional variation, reinforced ideologically. According to Fullinwider, the aims of schools in taking "*children of different ages, temperaments, interests, and abilities and over time brings them to a common level of achievement. It does so in two ways. First, it adjusts its own structure and mode of teaching to the characteristics of the students. [...] Second, a good school requires the students to adjust to it. [...] Suppose that a school's students differ 'culturally'. [...] Then the good school must adjust itself 'culturally' to the students, and it must overcome 'cultural' barriers to the students' adjusting to it. Here is the germinal idea of multicultural education*" (Fullinwider 1996:3).

In the report “School as an Arena for Education, Integration and Socialisation” of the CHICAM project (2004) it is stated: *“There is a tendency to consider cultural integration on a par with linguistic integration. This means that multiculturalism as a holistic approach to comprehension and exchange between different cultures is often reduced to the integration of migrant pupils in the predominant social context through the acquisition of the host country language. [...] Although the one nation – one territory – one language approach to the concept of culture has been strongly undermined in an academic context [...], in practice it is still responsible for a problematic trend towards reductionism. An example of this is the tendency to consider cultural integration on a par with linguistic integration. While learning the language of the new country is undoubtedly an essential condition for integration, this alone is insufficient. Various strategies have been developed in teaching the second language, each with its positive and negative sides, as will become clear from this review of the different schools in the project”* (Passani/Rydin, 2005:5).

The critical approach of Passani/Rydin can be considered the main argument that asserts the thesis that the struggle for preservation of the host countries, national, official language is a mere demonstration of the tendency for insecure language majorities to support moves to limit the use, promotion, and salience of minority languages in language development of children. Research results show that good proficiency in a native language is a solid basis for achieving competence in a second language. Contrary to this view, there is an often politically motivated argument asserting that full immersion in a second language rather than a combination of second language and native language instruction fosters language proficiency in a new language” (Luciak 2004:71).

Bauböck (2002) provides an overview of possible implementation of language programs Western European states offer for children of immigrant minorities as regards: *“There are basically three types of programs: special assistance for children who learn the national language as a second one, bicultural and bilingual programs that combine the national language with languages of origin, and instruction in the immigrants’ mother tongues. In all countries the primary educational target is to facilitate the acquisition of full competence in the language of the country of residence. Bilingual instruction in public schools is very rare and is generally considered as a special educational experiment. The only significant variation among European states is with regard to the third type of program, i.e. immigrant minority language instruction (IMLI)”* (Bauböck 2002:24).

Conclusions

We have seen that, in Europe, the intercultural question has lost importance in the last twenty years. In respect to immigration, during the best cases, it has been replaced by the social one (namely in France), which appears to be directed at combating social exclusion, or by neo-assimilationist appro-

ches, supporting the citizenship education. In fact, intercultural education is less and less a practice in the European education systems. This shift is a consequence of the fact that the issues raised by the schooling of immigrant children are bound to a crucial political debate: how to deal with the presence of immigrant or cultural minorities in societies, which are still mainly conceived as having a common culture, common traditions and shared values, as condition for being a nation? Therefore, the debate on educational strategies aimed at improving the achievement of immigrant students overlaps with discussions on the “management” of cultural diversity in the context of the nation-state. After many years during which the crisis of the European nation state has been theorized, namely as a consequence of the creation of the supra-state represented by the European Union, the coming back of nationalism, represented by populist but also by mainstream parties, pushes some scholars to talk about neo-nationalist Europe (Gingrich and Banks, 2006). This neo-nationalism is not only the fact of far right extremist groups, but the result of “banal nationalism” of the governments, defending national interests inside an European Union. This trend has been accompanied by a coming back of the stereotypes among Europeans, that the national press has fuelled. For example, in Germany, where no big extremist nationalist party exists, the anti-Southern European prejudices and sentiment are very strong. The coming back of nationalism has, of course, affected minorities and immigrants in everyday life and in education.

The underperformance of children of immigrant background in Europe is a fact, demonstrated by number of reports, mainly ones presenting the PISA. It has multiple causes, the class position being obviously one. The same reports observe notable contrasts in the PISA results for children of immigrants compared to those of children of non-immigrants between the European countries¹⁵ and the so-called settlement countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. In this last group of countries, PISA results for the children of immigrants have shown small differences with those of children of non-immigrants; in some cases they were better. This is not the case in Europe. Some scholars, hiding the importance of European nationalism, have attributed this result to the selective migration policies of Australia, Canada,

¹⁵ Another problem is the segregation in special schools. As Cline (2000) states: “There is discrimination against some minority groups across Europe. This discrimination is often expressed in the denial of educational opportunities. One form that this takes is to expedite the admission of minority children into special schools and units.” (Cline 2000:12) Luciak (2004) concludes with respect to the discriminatory dimension of the enrolment of immigrant and minority students in “special education”.

“Over-representation of pupils with a migration background in special education appears to be a common phenomenon in many countries of the European Union. In some countries, a high over-representation constitutes an especially problematic case. This issue is of particular concern, because attendance in special education schools negatively affects the educational and future employment opportunities of these pupils” (Luciak 2004:30,31).

New Zealand countries and the attractiveness of the United States generally to highly educated migrants. Without neglecting the class position and the parents' resources and education, it cannot be denied that this analysis sounds as a simplistic explanation: on the contrary more work should be done on the contrary in respects to the abandon of the intercultural and multicultural approach and on the return of nationalism, and how it affects school performance of children with immigrant background.

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