

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

Conference Paper

**Contribution to Workshop 5, Session 2:
Intercultural Citizenship Education –
New Perspectives for Learning at Schools**

**“INTERACT: Intercultural Active Citizenship Education”
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This project is meant to focus on the intercultural element of citizenship education and it aims to provide guidelines for teacher education in this area.

It intends to follow three main steps:

- (1) document analysis;
- (2) curriculum analysis;
- (3) an empirical study.

This project aims to establish links between official documents, curriculum management and the teachers' experiences, interests and expectations with regard to Citizenship Education, with a special focus on the intercultural dimension, in order to make general and specific recommendations as far as teacher education in this area is concerned.

The purpose of this project is to contribute to the effective implementation of official guidelines on this matter and to the expansion of good practices that have been scattered in the schools.

This project is also meant to map out, in each of the participant countries, the teacher development programmes and postgraduate courses that can offer relevant education for educators, as far as the intercultural dimension of citizenship is concerned, and to assess them in the light of the reviewed bibliography, of the official guidelines, at the European and national guidelines, and of the teachers' voices.

This project has focused on the perceptions, experiences and expectations that teachers have about the intercultural dimension of citizenship education, both as citizens and as educators. It is also looking at the relationships that teachers establish with NGOs and on the way they use the information they receive from the media. The project will analyse both inputs and outputs in teacher education, i. e. their

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sources of knowledge, both content and experiential knowledge, and the possibilities they can create in order to become active participative educators within the scope of intercultural citizenship education.

The partners in this project are:

- [Centro de Estudos Sociais, Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal \(Coordinator\)](#)
- [Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet, Danmark](#)
- [Departamento de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura, Universidad de Valladolid, España](#)
- [Institute of Education, University of London](#) and the [Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, University of Leeds](#)

We are answering the questions below according to our interviews to academics and policy-makers who were involved in the policy-making in educational matters in the last decades in the four participating countries. Find more information in the project webpage (WP6):

- **Which political topics and issues should be addressed in both curricula and learning materials?**

According to the Portuguese interviewees, the concept of education for citizenship is a complex concept dealing with difference, and its various elements, and it should be approached from an interdisciplinary point of view and focus on issues like health education, environment education, road safety education, etc.

European policy appears not to impact on any aspect of policy making for intercultural active citizenship education in Britain. Those familiar with European policies are not invited to contribute to the formation of domestic policy.

According to the Danish interviews, democratic education is as much about educational methods and skills, as it is a matter of knowledge of political systems, rights and duties. One interviewee distinguishes between teaching *about* democracy and *through* democracy. In this connection the Danish educational system is understood by interviewees to emphasize personal education and development rather than political education. This entails that teaching methodologies are given weight: dialogue, discussion, participation and group work are all methods emphasized as central to democratic education.

In Spain, with the Education Reform of 2004 (LOCE), the concept of Intercultural Education was linked to dialogue, coexistence, plurality, diversity and integration. It started to be explicitly stated in the documents and according to the interviewees the purpose was “*to generate a comprehension of other cultures and other social ways*” and “*to develop in students an open mind towards other cultural codes, other realities*”. With the last Education Reform of 2005 (LOE), the concept is linked to culture, multiculturalism, integration, diversity, equity and respect. There is an acknowledge of different cultures coexisting in our society (a 400% increment of immigrants in the last years) and the education politics tried to foster integration in order to facilitate social cohesion.

- **Is it necessary to ‘rethink’ (or redefine) basic intercultural education terms and approaches?**

According to the Portuguese interviewees, the main objectives pointed out by the interviewees are: (a) acquisition of social competences in the classroom, crucial for becoming a democratic citizen in a multilingual and multicultural society; (b) reflection upon social experiences; (c) development of a critical approach and argumentative skills as key tools for democratic citizenship. The interviewees also mentioned the importance of addressing different levels of citizenship, namely local, national and global.

A number of British policy makers consider that closing the achievement gap between different

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ethnic minority groups is a greater priority than teaching intercultural understanding.

In Denmark, general aims of the reformed curricula are: to educate democratic citizens and prepare the students for participation in a democratic society, as well as (in youth education) *democratic education in a local, national, European and global perspective*. In addition to these generally formulated aims, history and civics are emphasized as the most relevant subjects for the development of citizenship education, human rights and democratic education.

In Spain, in the curricular guidelines of the Education Reform of 2002 (LOCE), the cross-curricular topics were not made explicit or developed. However, there was an implicit reference to them in the different subjects of the curriculum and an explicit reference in the subject Ethics. The contents of this subject were related to the teaching in values, rules, responsibility, solidarity and empathy. The methodology was oriented towards dialogue and critical thinking.

- **How is the history of immigration and of migrants presented in schools? How should the essentials of European history, i.e. Enlightenment, Colonialism, Holocaust, Communism be adequately taught to immigrants?**

The main objectives of intercultural education as mentioned by Portuguese interviewees are: (a) everyone's entitlement to be treated as a citizen with full rights, in order to ensure social cohesion; (b) knowledge and respect for different cultures; (c) critical assessment of cultural paradoxes – their similarities and differences; (d) avoidance of stereotypical representations of individuals; (e) learning to live in a multicultural society; (f) teaching Portuguese as a second language in order to accommodate immigrants within the school system.

There is no consensus on the meaning of multiculturalism in Britain, whether used in the context of education or when referring to trends in wider society. Multicultural education remains a controversial issue for a number of policy makers. Many policy makers are uncomfortable with the concept of multicultural education and prefer to talk about education for diversity, for example.

According to Danish interviewees, democratic education is generally associated with a culturally homogenous society. One interviewee points out that democracy is a term that is given political priority in education, but that is not in any clear sense associated with intercultural or multicultural issues. Where democracy is generally a central concept and buzz word in political contexts, the term intercultural education is marginalized and seen as highly controversial in policy initiatives related to both basic and youth education. Only in foreign language education intercultural issues are not seen as explicitly controversial.

According to the Spanish interviewees, the concept of Intercultural Education as stated in the Education Reform of 1990 (LOGSE) is linked to diversity, immigrants, different cultures, human rights, integration and respect. However, the concept itself was not taken into account when designing and writing this law in an explicit way.