About Proceedings

This document contains 20 articles submitted from participants of the IAIE conference “Another Brick in the Wall” in Amsterdam, 11-15 November 2019. In total, the Conference content was divided into 8 strands. However, not all strands submitted papers for the Proceedings. Below are represented the following:

Strand 1. Intercultural Competence
Strand 2. Bilingualism and Multilingual Education
Strand 3. Cooperative Learning and other interactive learning approaches
Strand 6: Education relating to migrants and refugees
Strand 7. (Global) Citizenship Education
Strand 8. Miscellaneous

The Proceedings are organized as it follows:
First, all abstracts are displayed per strand. Consequently, the whole article, including abstract, main text and graphs, as well as notes and references, are included. All abstracts and articles can be found in the Content table below.

The Conference Proceedings were prepared by Ivona Hristova and Hana Alhadi.
**Introduction by The IAIE President**

As President of the International Association for Intercultural Education, I would like to once again thank everybody who helped contribute to these Proceedings. A large amount of work went into this publication. But special thanks go to Hana Alhadi and first and foremost Ivona Hristova.

These Proceedings are the final outcome of the IAIE Conference ‘Another Brick in the Wall?’ that took place in Amsterdam from November 11- November 15, 2019. The conference itself represented a blend of inspiring field trips (e.g. Black Heritage tour in Amsterdam, a VIP visit to the Anne Frank House and a visit to the International Criminal Court), some 40 workshops and more than 150 presentations and panel discussions. Close to 400 educators participated from some 25 countries.

The conference allowed teachers, students and academics to share insights and experiences, and to be exposed to the state-of-the-art research on issues relating to diversity and education.

The Conference was a true collaborative effort between the IAIE and a number of other organizations active in the fields of Intercultural Education, human rights education, education about sexual diversity, democratic education, active citizenship education, global education, bilingual and multilingual education, and related fields. These organizations include the Denise School, the Hellenic Association for Intercultural Education, International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education (IASCE), the Rutu Foundation, Learn to Change: Change to Learn, the Korean Association for Multicultural Education (KAME), the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), Euroclio, and human-ed. We once again thank our partners and look forward to collaboration once more in our future conferences.

Recent events continue to highlight the importance of the work that everybody in this field is doing. The papers published in these proceeds will certainly provide clues and guidelines as to how we be better prepared for the challenges facing us in the coming years.

Warmest wishes to all,

Barry van Driel

President IAIE

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Contents

Abstracts. Strand 1: Intercultural Competence ................................................................. 6
Verhaeghe Kaat* and Wastijn Bertens*. Strong with Diversity through a narrative competent system .................................................. 7
Cinzia Zadra* and Simona Bartoli Kucher*. Preparing students for diversity: using transcultural literature to foster intercultural competence in Higher Education ...................................................... 8
Kovács Ivett Judit, Czachesz Erzsébet; Vámos Ágnes. Individual Needs Or Cultural Differences? – Inquiry Into The Beliefs of Teachers Working In Multicultural Early Years Settings (Case study in Hungarian Context) .......................................................................................................................... 9
Irina Sikorskaya and Natyala Nykyfenko. The inquiry for intercultural learning in higher education in Ukraine .......................................................................................................................... 10
Domiziana Turcatti and Kiara Assaraf. Lessons Gained from a Case Study of a Latin American NGO in London: The Role Intercultural Competence Plays in the Delivery of Services to Migrant Communities .......................................................................................................................... 11

Abstracts. Strand 2: Bilingualism and Multilingual Education ........................................ 12
Bora Kim. Obstacles and Ways Forward in the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Peru .......................................................................................................................... 13

Abstracts. Strand 3: Cooperative Learning and other interactive learning approaches ........ 14
Giovanna Malusà. Challenges experienced by teachers in implementing cooperative learning activities after brief in-service training ............................................................................. 15
David Duran & Jesús Ribosa. Learning by teaching: How can students learn by teaching their peers .......................................................................................................................... 16
Paola Giorgis, Isabella Pescarmona, Federica Setti. Who is ‘the Other’? A Cooperative Intercultural Experience ................................................................................................................................................. 17
Giovanna Malusà. Playing as you learn. Facilitating an inclusive climate through the Findhorn games ........................................................................................................................................... 19

Abstracts. Strand 4: Education relating to migrants and refugees .................................... 20
Dr. Virginia Signorini. Power and (dis)empowerment in the Italian refugees’ reception system ..... 21
Maura Sellars PhD, Scott Imig PhD. School Leadership, Reflective Practice and Education for Students with Refugee Backgrounds: A Pathway to Radical Empathy ................................................................................................................. 22
Mafalda Franco Leitão, Albino Cunha, Manuela Malheiro Ferreira. Refugees in Portugal: four case studies of refugee integration in schools in the receiving country” ................................................................................. 23

Abstracts. Strand 7: (Global) Citizenship Education ....................................................... 26
Arlette Audiffred. Knowledge to Action K2A Projects in Cherán Michoacán SDG # 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities to promote the intercultural competence of global citizenship .......... 27
Ricardo Vieira, Ana Vieira, Pedro Vieira. Education for citizenship, development and sustainability: a critical look at the transfer of knowledge .................................................................................................................. 28

Abstracts. Strand 8: Miscellaneous .................................................................................. 29
Sanja Španja and Ana Kurtović. Assessing the relation between intercultural sensitivities and personality traits in high school teachers in the city of Vukovar, Croatia ........................................ 30
Ee Lin Lee. The (De)Construction of the Other Through International Volunteerism .............. 31
Michael Gómez Dobrott. An analysis of a school experience for the First Nations in Canada: Organization, Structure, Philosophy and Attention to Cultural Diversity .............................................32
Kelly C. Davenport and Lisa S. Hoffstein. The Freire Schools Model .................................. 33

Articles. Strand 1: Intercultural Competence ...................................................................... 34
Verhaeghe Kaat and Wastijn Berta. Strong with Diversity through a narrative competent system .................................................................................................................. 35
Cinzia Zadra and Simona Bartoli Kucher. Preparing students for diversity: using transcultural literature to foster intercultural competence in Higher Education ......................................................... 55
Kovács Ivett Judit, Czachesz Erzsébet; Vámós Ágnes. Individual Needs Or Cultural Differences? – Inquiry Into The Beliefs of Teachers Working In Multicultural Early Years Settings (Case study in Hungarian Context) ........................................................................................................ 78
Irina Sikorskaya and Natalya Nykyfenko. The inquiry for intercultural learning in higher education in Ukraine ................................................................................................................. 99
Domiziana Turcatti and Kiara Assaraf. Lessons Gained from a Case Study of a Latin American NGO in London: The Role Intercultural Competence Plays in the Delivery of Services to Migrant Communities ........................................................................................................... 113

Articles. Strand 2: Bilingualism and Multilingual Education ............................................. 134
Bora Kim. Obstacles and Ways Forward in the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Peru ............................................................................................................................ 135

Articles. Strand 3: Cooperative Learning and other interactive learning approaches ...... 158
Giovanna Malusà. Challenges experienced by teachers in implementing cooperative learning activities after brief in-service training ............................................................................ 159
David Duran & Jesús Ribosa. Learning by teaching: How can students learn by teaching their peers ........................................................................................................................................ 179
Paola Giorgis, Isabella Pescarmona, Federica Setti. Who is ‘the Other’? A Cooperative Intercultural Experience .......................................................................................................................... 185
Giovanna Malusà. Playing as you learn. Facilitating an inclusive climate through the Findhorn games ............................................................................................................................................. 203

Articles. Strand 6: Education relating to migrants and refugees ......................................... 220
Dr. Virginia Signorini. Power and (dis)empowerment in the Italian refugees’ reception system ...... 221
Maura Sellars PhD, Scott Imig PhD. School Leadership, Reflective Practice and Education for Students with Refugee Backgrounds: A Pathway to Radical Empathy ........................................................................................................... 234
Mafalda Franco Leitão, Albino Cunha, Manuela Malheiro Ferreira. Refugees in Portugal: four case studies of refugee integration in schools in the receiving country” ...................................................................... 248

Articles. Strand 7: (Global) Citizenship Education ............................................................... 264
Arlette Audiffred. Knowledge to Action K2A Projects in Cherán Michoacán SDG # 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities to promote the intercultural competence of global citizenship .................................................. 265
Ricardo Vieira, Ana Vieira, Pedro Vieira. Education for citizenship, development and sustainability: a critical look at the transfer of knowledge ................................................................. 275

**Articles. Strand 8: Miscellaneous** ........................................................................................................... 292

Sanja Španja and Ana Kurtović. Assessing the relation between intercultural sensitives and personality traits in high school teachers in the city of Vukovar, Croatia ........................................ 293

Ee Lin Lee. The (De)Construction of the Other Through International Volunteerism .................. 312

Michael Gómez Dobrott. An analysis of a school experience for the First Nations in Canada: Organization, Structure, Philosophy and Attention to Cultural Diversity ................................. 328

Kelly C. Davenport and Lisa S. Hoffstein. The Freire Schools Model .................................................. 347
Abstracts. Strand 1: Intercultural Competence
Verhaeghe Kaatab* and Wastijn Bertac*. Strong with Diversity through a narrative competent system

In the complex city of Brussels, educational and welfare services are challenged by many questions. To address these questions, reflection about longstanding models of “family”, “child”, “education” is necessary. Previous research shows that professionals nowadays have different needs when working with these challenges. We state that working with people in contexts of diversity needs to acknowledge the importance of narratives. Starting from an open literature review and previous practice-based design research, the diversattude was defined. An attitude that enables professionals to use diversity as a strength. The research introduces an enhanced narrative competent system to work on this attitude. It is argued that the child is at the centre of this system. The main result is the introduced interdisciplinary, collaborative and narrative coaching method. This way of coaching aims to enable professionals to work in contexts of diversity and to enhance the preconditions needed to do so.

Keywords: coaching, diversity, narrative, identity, ecec
Cinzia Zadra* and Simona Bartoli Kucher. Preparing students for diversity: using transcultural literature to foster intercultural competence in Higher Education

This paper presents a multidisciplinary and transcultural project which aims to promote intercultural competence in Higher Education students and, for this purpose, we suggest a specific literary genre, ‘transcultural literature’. The term, ‘intercultural literature’ emphasizes the interactive character of cultural influences, helps us to understand the processes of formation of hybrid and multi-layered identities and suggests a mindset between worlds and different languages and between the boundaries of different identities. The second matrix, to which our project refers, recognizes the narrative tradition as a fundamental source to cultivate imagination, critical thinking and the ability to imagine other worlds and other dimensions of being. The study refers to two main sources of data collection: a series of reflections, in the form of journal entries, written by students as part of their assignment. The results provide valuable insights about the integration of literary text in the reflective process for development of intercultural competences.

Keywords: Higher Education; transcultural literature; imagination; intercultural competence; reflective journals
Kovács Ivett Judit, Czachesz Erzsébet; Vámos Ágnes. Individual Needs Or Cultural Differences? – Inquiry Into The Beliefs of Teachers Working In Multicultural Early Years Settings (Case study in Hungarian Context)

In Hungary, the growing heterogeneity and inequalities of the society is a relatively new phenomenon that sets up new challenges for the teachers and educational institutions. The research explores private international kindergartens in Hungary to examine their intercultural teacher communities with special focus on the possible tensions caused by cultural differences. The study is embedded in the findings of connected research areas namely the literature on transmigration, international and elite education, intercultural education and teacher communities. Within the interpretative paradigm, the research uses a mixed method approach, with a case study design, including the methods of document analysis, questionnaire, semi-structured interview and observation. The questionnaire included the short version of the Cultural Intelligence Scale by Ang and Van Dyne (2007). The study unfolds the inner world of six international kindergartens in Hungary. Every kindergarten seemed to celebrate multiculturalism and to welcome teachers arriving from different cultures, but not all of them considered their total involvement in all aspects of the pedagogical work and organizational communication. Even though the interviews revealed many examples of intercultural conflicts and tensions, none of the institutions provided intercultural training and the teachers claimed to learn intercultural competencies from their colleagues. Teachers typically look at cultural differences mainly as individual needs of children and parents and they tend to consider families as paying clients of a private kindergarten, when they strive to fulfill their needs that seems to be unusual for them. The research provides new empirical data from the Central-European Region in this research field that gains added value by its uniqueness of the almost uncovered kindergarten context.

Keywords: international kindergartens, organizational culture of international schools, intercultural teacher communities, intercultural competence, education of transmigrant children
Irina Sikorskaya and Natalya Nykyforenko. The inquiry for intercultural learning in higher education in Ukraine

The aim of the paper is to explore the reasoning for social discourse on implementation of intercultural learning in higher education in Ukraine from a perspective of interdisciplinary and complex approach in the tertiary education. The study is guided by the questions of what are the official views on developments of intercultural learning, how it relates to internationalization efforts of higher education institutions in regards to upbringing intercultural awareness and competences of young generation in a country in transition like Ukraine. The specifics of intercultural learning implementation in higher education in Ukraine have been analyzed. The study concludes that Ukrainian universities face enormous opportunities for intercultural learning development and adaption to the changing local environment and global challenges.

**Keywords:** higher education, internationalization, intercultural learning
Domiziana Turcatti and Kiara Assaraf. Lessons Gained from a Case Study of a Latin American NGO in London: The Role Intercultural Competence Plays in the Delivery of Services to Migrant Communities

This paper explores the role that intercultural competence plays in the delivery of services of migrant-led organisations to migrant communities. Intercultural competence refers to one’s ability to effectively use a set of knowledge, skills and individual traits when working with culturally diverse people. It specifically examines the role of intercultural competence in a London-based Latin American non-profit organisation that supports Latin American migrants with welfare advice, workshops and sociocultural events. This study relies on ethnographic fieldwork conducted within the NGO by Turcatti from October 2018 to July 2019 and on survey analysis carried out by Assaraf while coordinating one of the NGO’s projects from January 2018 to July 2019. The findings indicated that NGO’s staff demonstrated and valued four intercultural competence traits: (1) knowledge of their clients and (2) of the British welfare and legal system, (3) the capacity to communicate effectively with clients and third parties on behalf of clients; and (4) openness to clients’ involvement in the NGO and new ideas. Such intercultural competence traits allowed the NGO to promote their clients’ integration in their own community and in British society by enhancing Latin Americans’ access to welfare and information, critical awareness of their rights, social networks, and new everyday knowledge that improves not only the NGO, but more importantly their community. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of intercultural competence in migrant-led organisations for the successful delivery of services to migrant communities and towards the promotion for their integration.
Abstracts. Strand 2: Bilingualism and Multilingual Education
This paper looks into the implementation side of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) in Peru. IBE is an educational policy mainly to provide indigenous students with mother-tongue based education, and foster intercultural dialogue to enhance mutual understanding amongst students from different cultural backgrounds. Multiple values and rationales are lying in this policy, such as quality education for all, preserving cultural diversity, and decolonisation. Peru was historically the heart of Inca Empire, which was later colonized by Spain from 1533 for about 300 years. However, still 47 indigenous languages are spoken in the country and 17% of the Peruvian population have these languages as their mother tongues. In this regard, IBE certainly matters to Peru, and it would be the key policy in order to achieve social cohesion.

The paper largely divides into two parts: 1) identification of existing obstacles which impede effective operation of the policy, and 2) demonstration of contributing factors for its successful implementation found in the qualitative, field research. Based on the findings classified into these two categories, the paper draws suggestions in the conclusion section.
Abstracts. Strand 3: Cooperative Learning and other interactive learning approaches
Giovanna Malusà. Challenges experienced by teachers in implementing cooperative learning activities after brief in-service training

Abstract
Educational research has for many years demonstrated that cooperative learning fosters the development of social and cognitive skills in students. In the Italian classroom, however, largely transmissive methods still prevail and teachers are faced with numerous challenges when trying to put into practice what they have learned in dedicated training courses. This research intends to explore the difficulties experienced in the classroom one year after a short (10-25 hours) experiential training course, through a quantitative survey that involved 102 elementary and middle school teachers, investigating their beliefs and perceived self-efficacy and discussing the main challenges that emerged at the relational and organizational levels.
Abstract
Evidence-based education suggests that we have to turn classrooms into communities of learners, where students not only learn from the teacher, but also from the mutual help they offer each other. Peer learning, either via cooperative learning or peer tutoring, is thus necessary. However, one of the barriers in the use of these methodologies has to do with the unshakable conception that peer learning benefits the student who receives help, whereas the student who offers help loses learning opportunities. In this paper, we are going to go through the evidences of the possibility of learning by teaching, as well as its limitations. Moreover, we are going to show and discuss some practical implications based on this principle.
Keywords: learning by teaching; peer learning; peer tutoring; cooperative learning

Resum
L’educació basada en evidències suggereix que hem de convertir les aules en comunitats d’aprenents, on els estudiants no només aprenguin del docent, sinó també de l’ajuda mútua que s’ofereixen entre ells. Per tant, l’aprenentatge entre iguals és necessari, ja sigui mitjançant l’aprenentatge cooperatiu o la tutoria entre iguals. Tanmateix, una de les barreres en l’ús d’aquestes metodologies té a veure amb la concepció ferma que l’aprenentatge entre iguals beneficia l’alumne que rep ajuda, mentre que l’alumne que ofereix ajuda perd oportunitats d’aprenentatge. En aquest article analitzarem les evidències de la possibilitat d’aprendre ensenyant, així com les seves limitacions. A més, exposarem i debatrem algunes implicacions pràctiques basades en aquest principi.
Paraules clau: aprendre ensenyant; aprenentatge entre iguals; tutoria entre iguals; aprenentatge cooperatiu

Resumen
La educación basada en evidencias sugiere que debemos convertir las aulas en comunidades de aprendices, donde los estudiantes no sólo aprendan del docente, sino también de la ayuda mutua que se ofrecen entre ellos. Por lo tanto, el aprendizaje entre iguales es necesario, ya sea mediante el aprendizaje cooperativo o la tutoría entre iguales. Sin embargo, una de las barreras en el uso de estas metodologías tiene que ver con la concepción firme de que el aprendizaje entre iguales beneficia al alumno que recibe ayuda, mientras que el alumno que ofrece ayuda pierde oportunidades de aprendizaje. En este artículo analizaremos las evidencias de la posibilidad de aprender enseñando, así como sus limitaciones. Además, expondremos y debatiremos algunas implicaciones prácticas basadas en este principio.
Palabras clave: aprender enseñando; aprendizaje entre iguales; tutoría entre iguales; aprendizaje cooperativo
Paola Giorgis, Isabella Pescarmona, Federica Setti  Who is ‘the Other’? A Cooperative Intercultural Experience

Abstract

Our workshop involved participants in a critical analysis of discourses and images on issues such as culture and identity, and how, in the public debate, they contribute to the (re)production of ‘Otherness’. We presented several examples from different sources, including literature and the visual arts. Through Cooperative Learning activities, participants engaged in the discussion of the categories used to define the Other in order to deconstruct prejudices, to develop intercultural competence and to co-construct an intercultural discourse.

Keywords: Otherness; Cooperative Learning; Intercultural Education

Abstract
Why is Cooperative Learning (CL) an inclusive approach to education? What are the psychological mechanisms that can explain its efficacy? Starting from personal experiences and reflections, we will analyse how important CL is in terms of satisfaction of personal needs and powerful instrument to promote non-competitive interactions. We will use a Transactional Analysis point of view. This psychodynamic approach to personality and social interactions can give useful hints to understand why “the most desirable and beneficial form of interaction is a cooperative, non-violent, nurturing relationship” (Steiner, 1974).

Keywords: cooperative learning, transactional analysis, inclusion
Giovanna Malusà. Playing as you learn. Facilitating an inclusive climate through the Findhorn games

ABSTRACT

Creating an inclusive and trusting climate in multicultural and conflicted classrooms is an essential prerequisite for cooperative activities and the development of students’ social and emotional skills, in a climate free of judgement and prejudice.

Based on the Experiential Learning Model of the Findhorn Foundation (learning by doing), in this paper I will present the key elements of a variety of games for different purposes, and cooperative games in particular, discussing their possible implementation in multicultural educational contexts to build trust in both new and established groups.

**Keywords**: cooperative games; trust; inclusion; multicultural contexts; experiential learning model; teacher education
Abstracts. Strand 6: Education relating to migrants and refugees
Dr. Virginia Signorini. Power and (dis)empowerment in the Italian refugees’ reception system

In this contribute I aim to reflect on the dynamics of power, empowerment and disempowerment inscribed in refugees’ experiences when learning a language as second language; I will refer – grasping from my experience of social worker and researcher - to the contradictory dimension of the “Italian language school” organised by a refugees’ reception project in Italy.

When entering the project refugees are always invited to respect the rules of the project, including attending the language school. The project might “punish” the refugee if the frequency to the school is irregular, and a possible sanction is the reduction of the pocket money that refugees regularly receive from social workers every month.

Such (infantilizing) practices promote dynamics of control and asymmetry in a relation based on the power held by the project towards refugees. At the same time learning Italian language still represents an important step to gain autonomy and access to fundamental rights. Which are the possible alternatives to support refugees’ learning process? Which are the practical experiences that lead to a positive and successful way of learning Italian language?

In my proposal I will demonstrate how an empowering culture of asylum represents a concrete answer and a counterstrategy to depoliticizing and depersonalizing policies that affect students with refugee background.
Maura Sellars PhD, Scott Imig PhD. School Leadership, Reflective Practice and Education for Students with Refugee Backgrounds: A Pathway to Radical Empathy

Abstract
As the world becomes increasingly violent and disruptive by forces which impact on millions of families, destroying the communities and ways of life, the lives and prospects of those who survive are increasingly dependent on the humanity of others for understanding, generosity and acceptance as fellow humans. Many of those who suffer forced migration as refugees and asylum seekers are children and you people who have the right to be educated and whose future wellbeing is heavily reliant on acceptance and inclusion into societies which are very different from their homelands. Whilst only a relatively small percentage (16%) of these populations are placed in schools in developed countries, the challenges for both the students and school leaders is considerable. This paper discusses the importance of belonging as part of school culture and ethos, indicating that deep, critical reflective practice undertaken by school leaders and principals with the intention of deliberately developing radical empathy, based on phenomenological principles, can play a critical role in transforming schooling for these students and their families. Furthermore, the possible impact of developing radical empathy is explored briefly using the perspective provided by Leithwood and his colleagues’ Four Path model of school leadership.
Mafalda Franco Leitão, Albino Cunha, Manuela Malheiro Ferreira.
Refugees in Portugal: four case studies of refugee integration in schools in the receiving country”

Abstract
These case studies are part of a broader research that the Centre for the Studies of Migrations and Intercultural Relations (Universidade Aberta) is undertaking.
We analysed children and parent’s educational backgrounds and children’s adjustment to the Portuguese educational system through questionnaire and interviews to four families of refugees.
The four families come from Syria and Palestine but their integration in Portugal is very diverse, due to their expectations towards staying in Portugal, returning to their country or moving to another where they have already relatives.
These families, with different educational backgrounds, live in Lisbon or on the suburbs of the city, in a suitable home for the household, receive support from host institutions, and children attend nearby schools where they have been welcomed and receive help especially with regard to the learning of the Portuguese language as well as other learning difficulties. Families expectations have influence on the effort of learning Portuguese, especially concerning the parents, on the value they attach to children success in Portuguese schools, the relationships they establish with schools and in particular with their children's teachers.
Furthermore, the host families and the friendship networks were very important for the integration success of those families.
In the four case studies children’s age influence their attachment to Portuguese schools, primary school children adapt more easily to Portuguese schools, teenagers who have attended schools in their countries of origin show difficulties in adapting to Portuguese schools and some have left them and sought to find later on a job.
To conclude: four case studies, four different families, four diverse realities.

Resumo
Os estudos de caso apresentados fazem parte de uma investigação mais ampla que o Centro de Estudos de Migrações e Relações Interculturais (Universidade Aberta) tem vindo a realizar.
Através da administração de um questionário e de entrevistas a quatro famílias de refugiados em Portugal, analisamos o percurso de formação de pais e filhos e o seu ajuste ao sistema educativo português.

As quatro famílias são originárias da Síria e da Palestina. Contudo, a sua integração em Portugal é muito diversificada devido às suas expectativas em relação à permanência em Portugal, ao regresso ao seu país ou à mudança para outro país europeu onde têm parentes.

Estas famílias, com formação diferente, moram em Lisboa ou nos subúrbios da cidade. Têm residência adequada para a família, recebem apoio de instituições anfitriãs e as crianças frequentam escolas na zona residencial. Foram bem acolhidas e recebem apoio escolar, especialmente na aprendizagem da língua portuguesa, mas também noutros domínios onde apresentam dificuldades de aprendizagem.

Verifica-se que as expectativas familiares influenciam os esforços realizados para a aprendizagem da língua portuguesa. Especialmente no valor que os pais atribuem ao sucesso das crianças nas escolas portuguesas, nas relações que estes estabelecem com as escolas e, em particular, com os professores dos seus filhos.

Além do exposto, as famílias anfitriãs e as redes de amizade e vizinhança foram muito importantes para o sucesso da integração destas famílias.

Nos quatro estudos de caso, verificou-se que a idade das crianças influencia a sua integração na escola portuguesa. As crianças do 1º ciclo adaptam-se mais facilmente às escolas portuguesas, mas os adolescentes que frequentaram a escola nos seus países de origem mostram maiores dificuldades de adaptação, tendo alguns abandonado a escolarização para entrar precocemente no mundo laboral.

Concluindo: quatro estudos de caso, quatro famílias diferentes, quatro realidades diversas.
Abstracts. Strand 7: (Global) Citizenship Education
Arlette Audiffred. Knowledge to Action K2A Projects in Cherán Michoacán SDG # 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities to promote the intercultural competence of global citizenship

The main objective of the project is to apply the 11th objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Cities and Communities to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by using the World Savvy K2A protocol Knowledge to action projects, design thinking with the students of the fifth semester (10th grade) at the entrepreneurship class in conjunction with the history class. The students aimed to develop a project to promote the social development of the Cherán community.

As students develop the core concepts, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors of global competence, they gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for how each individual affects and is affected by the problems and issues that face our global society.

Keywords: World Savvy, K2A protocol, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Global Citizenship, IES Survey
Ricardo Vieira, Ana Vieira, Pedro Vieira. Education for citizenship, development and sustainability: a critical look at the transfer of knowledge

The increasing complexification of contemporary societies, as a result of globalization processes, both invite uniformity and stimulate the defence of fundamentalist identities.

An education for multicultural citizenship is needed to construct individuals with plural identities capable of articulating local belonging with national and global belonging, and understanding their world as well as others, always dynamic and between cultures.

It is also crucial to think education not only as the engine of economic growth but fundamentally as a lever for human development.

Universities and schools in general, if they want to innovate and contribute to social and intercultural development, have to investigate and learn from local cultures before they want to teach them. Therefore, it has to consider the local knowledges and to build bridges between the local cultures and the hegemonic culture of each nation-state. In this sense, school cannot be inculcating a new order of life, economy, technology, culture, etc., out of context in relation to the environment and the community in which it operates.

In opposition, it is a transfer of knowledge that contributes more to rural exodus and massive emigration than to human and social development.

Keywords: development and sustainability; empowerment; Education for (Dis) involvement; socio-educational intervention; transfer of knowledge
Abstracts. Strand 8: Miscellaneous
Sanja Španja and Ana Kurtović. Assessing the relation between intercultural sensitives and personality traits in high school teachers in the city of Vukovar, Croatia

The goal of this empirical research was to examine the interdependence between intercultural sensitives and personality traits. This research was conducted with teachers (N=172) from all secondary schools in the city of Vukovar, Croatia. Taking into account previous researches and the fact that, in the post-war community, the ethnic division is evident in all aspects of social life including education. The pupils in Vukovar attend separate classes divided according to ethnicity, and the curriculum is provided in Croatian or Serbian language (Corkalo, Ajdukovic, 2007). The division of classes, 90s war, as well as ongoing ethnic intolerance, create a challenging situation with regard to intercultural sensitivity in teachers. For that reason, it was important to examine teachers’ intercultural sensitivity, as well as its association with personality traits. An intercultural competent teacher is the one who is successful in the communicative transformation from monoculture to multicultural person. In order to achieve that, the authors suggested that teachers need to develop a new set of skills with already developed awareness towards culturally different groups taking into account the personality traits of teachers. As a measure of intercultural sensitivity, The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS by Chen and Starosta, 2000) was used, and Big Five Inventory (BFI by Benet-Martinez and John, 1998) was used to assess personality traits. The results have confirmed significant associations between intercultural sensitivity and personality, namely a negative correlation with neuroticism and positive correlations with conscientiousness and agreeableness. It seems that teacher who is more emotionally stable (low neuroticism), who are responsible and efficient in their responsibilities, as well as friendly and compassionate toward others, tend to be more interculturally sensitive. Therefore, our results suggest that, while intercultural sensitivity does depend on environmental factors, personality factors should be considered in both examining and promoting intercultural sensitivity.

Keywords: Personality, intercultural sensitivity, high school, teachers
Ee Lin Lee. The (De)Construction of the Other Through International Volunteerism

This study examines how the international volunteerism (IV) experience in Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar of college students permits meaningful intercultural exchange with their hosts. Using the politically responsive constructivist theory of communication, the study reveals that the volunteers’ discourse about the Other is a reproduction of the White American dominant cultural discourse about the Other. The participants’ (de)construction of the Other is hypothetical, acontextual, and politically correct, and therefore diminishes the voice of the Other while reinforcing an imagined race-neutral context in IV. Implications of the findings suggest the necessary interrogation of Whiteness in the current color-blind IV industry and recommend crucial education to prepare IV participants to engage in critical intercultural dialogue.
Michael Gómez Dobrott. An analysis of a school experience for the First Nations in Canada: Organization, Structure, Philosophy and Attention to Cultural Diversity

Since the beginning of this century, there have been several schools which have begun to operate from an indigenous perspective. This has been a response to the country’s social reality and an attempt to mitigate and correct the consequences of residential schools, which caused significant and almost irreparable cultural losses. Yet, very little research has been carried out on how these schools work or on the degree of success of the programs being implemented.

The aim of this study is precisely to understand how one of them, the Aboriginal Learning Centre of Calgary, functions. We will do this by referring to the principles of intercultural education and by analyzing, at the same time, how the Aboriginal Focus Program is carried out.

With this purpose, we observed the school's daily routine, interviewed staff members, discussing topics such as their professional backgrounds, the basics of the school's management, their philosophy, the educational activities and their rapport with the families.

The resulting conclusions reveal that, despite the fact that not all the tenets of intercultural education are fulfilled, this school utilizes fundamental tools which help to construct, consolidate and preserve an indigenous cultural identity, while at the same time providing a safe space for the Aboriginal families of the city.

Keywords: Aboriginal Learning Center; intercultural education; indigenous; First Nations
Based on the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, Freire Charter School was founded in 1999 with the aim of providing educational engagement and opportunity within the urban landscape of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Twenty years later, Freire Schools is a thriving network of four urban campuses educating 2,000 students each year. Across the network, 89% of students are Black or Latinx, and almost all students qualify as economically disadvantaged. Our network is successful in empowering students to build their futures, graduating 87% from high school in four years. Network-wide, 77% of students report going to college the first year after graduating from high school. Many of these students are the first generation in their family to attend college.

This paper will present an overview of the twenty-year history of Freire Schools, focusing specifically on our flagship school, Freire Charter School, and our successes, challenges and ongoing learning. We will highlight our connection to Social Justice Education, beginning with Paulo Freire’s core theories laid out in _Pedagogy of the Oppressed_; developing our own practices to best serve our students; adjusting and learning as we grow; and above all, always striving to serve, enrich and challenge our students. This paper reflects on what we have learned and contemplates the future of Freire Schools.

This paper and associated presentation is prepared in conjunction with a documentary film that includes the perspectives of Freire Schools students, families, faculty, staff, and alumni. Our goal is to share our rich twenty-year history of creating schools that educate—to the highest standard—traditionally underserved student populations, providing them with the power to build the future. The story of Freire Schools is one in which education and social justice are inextricably intertwined. Ultimately, it is a story of compassion, dedication, teaching, learning and laughter.
Articles. Strand 1:
Intercultural Competence
Verhaeghe Kaatab* and Wastijn Bertac*. Strong with Diversity through a narrative competent system

Abstract

In the complex city of Brussels, educational and welfare services are challenged by many questions. To address these questions, reflection about longstanding models of “family”, “child”, “education” is necessary. Previous research shows that professionals nowadays have different needs when working with these challenges. We state that working with people in contexts of diversity needs to acknowledge the importance of narratives. Starting from an open literature review and previous practice-based design research, the diversattitude was defined. An attitude that enables professionals to use diversity as a strength. The research introduces an enhanced narrative competent system to work on this attitude. It is argued that the child is at the centre of this system. The main result is the introduced interdisciplinary, collaborative and narrative coaching method. This way of coaching aims to enable professionals to work in contexts of diversity and to enhance the preconditions needed to do so.

Keywords: coaching, diversity, narrative, identity, ecec

Introduction

“Every child and adult has the right to develop in an environment of equity and with respect for diversity [...] without distinction or discrimination [...] whether of himself or of his family (UN declaration of the rights of the child, 1989).”

The aim of this paper is to explain why a narrative, interdisciplinary and collaborative method of coaching in an amplified competent system is a new and interesting way to enable professionals to work in contexts of diversity. It is a result of an interdisciplinary, practice based and design-oriented research that started within the field of Early Childhood Education (and Care, ECEC) in the city of Brussels. In this introduction, we want to state how the context of
Brussels, as a context for living, education and research, offers a complex perspective on diversity, with different layers of diversity continuously affecting each other. This complexity of the Brussels society challenges longstanding models of “family”, “child” or “education”. Specifically, in Brussels, the federalized structure of Belgium has created a diversity of governance which has enabled a diversity of practice, embodied by a diversity of people. This means that it becomes urgent to reflect, in order for professionals to become aware of beliefs and practices and re-negotiate their meanings in a democratic process. (Verhaeghe & Wastijn, 2018).

Besides the relevance for the complex urban context in Brussels, we see how our findings that are rooted in literature and data collected in the fields of education, welfare and socio-cultural work presented in this paper are relevant for various actors in similar societies. Societies that demand not only a different approach in education but also a different way in which professionals behave. (Saunders, Haskins, & Vasquez, 2015)

The result of data analysis brought us to our main argument that organisations that want to engage professionals with a relevant attitude to see diversity as a strength and work with it, require a systematic approach in coaching. In what follows, we first discuss what the research aims are and how data was collected and analysed. In results we show an integration of both relevant scientific literature combined with first interim interpretations of the data analyses. From our developed model for an attitude and systematic approach, we end with a proposed model to coach in the conclusions.

**Materials and Methods**

Based on two large practice-based studies, this paper presents a narrative, interdisciplinary and collaborative method of coaching in an amplified competent system as a new and interesting way to enable professionals to work in contexts of diversity. The first study focuses on the Being of children in a time where the future, the becoming of children is central. It aims to create an all-inclusive pedagogical climate where everyone can be and belong. Two guiding research questions of this study were:

- ‘How do children experience the narrative space to be and to belong?’
- ‘How can (narrative collaborative and art-based) coaching support educational professionals in this process?’.
The second study examined the climate in which educational professionals, such as teachers, work and develop. Professionals who are willing to adapt and develop their professional attitudes, skills, knowledge to the needs of the present and diverse society need supporting work conditions. The main research questions in this study were:

- ‘What is expected from educational professionals to work with diversity?’
- ‘How can the creation of the conditions that are needed in schools for educational professionals to live up to these expectations be supported and facilitated?’

Both designed based practice-oriented researches used the model of ADDIE to structure the methodology: Analyse, Design, Develop and Implement with an integration of Evaluation in all phases of the process (Figure 1).

Data was collected by a triangulation of literature study, interview, focus group, observation and art-based method. In the process all ethical considerations were taken into account. Informed consents of all participants, including the children was obtained.
During the analysis phase there was an open screening of literature about the following terms: identity, diversity, intercultural education, competence development, coaching and professional development. To triangulate this academic perspective, theoretical concepts were presented in interviews with both managers (n= 7) as well as teachers (n= 10). Also one focus group with teacher trainers (n= 8) was conducted. All respondents work in a Dutch speaking school located in the Brussels region. To monitor the validity and trustworthiness, the same script for all these data collection was used. NVivo was used for open coding and analysis.

To get insight in how children experience the pedagogical climate in contexts of diversity, a total of 64 hours of observations were done, in 3 different contexts: a school, an out-of-school care centre and a socio-cultural organisation. In the first two a method of non-participating observations was used. In the third context the observations were participative. Data was analysed through open and thematic coding using NVivo.

To include the perspective of children, an art-based data-collection method that combined drawing and interviewing was used. Through artful activities, children actively construct understandings of themselves and their worlds (Van Heusden, 2010; Wright, 2010). During 30 to 50 minutes, children (n= 30) individually made a drawing starting from ‘How does your dream school/organisation looks like?’ While the children drew, they were invited to explain what, who or why something was in the picture. Only elements of what could be seen on the drawing were questioned. All questions and answers were noted. All data was analysed through open and thematic coding using NVivo.

**Results**

The results presented in this paper shows how the literature review, existing coaching method (e.g. narrative coaching, Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020) and the above analyses of practice-based data lead to a first design of a narrative collaborative interdisciplinary coaching method.

**Addressing the needs in contexts of diversity**

*The need to see Identity as social and pedagogical concept*

Identity is a key concept when discussing how to deal with diversity (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020). Identity development is an ever-changing dynamic process that is contextual,
intersubjective and socially constructed (Aydin, 2007; Josselson, 1994). Identification and separation are the two main processes involved in the creation of identity (Verhaeghe, 2012; Colpaert, 2009). Recognition and belonging are conditional to develop a strong identity. ‘The Other’ plays a crucial role in these processes. Identity starts where I and thou meet (Buber, 1959), or, as De Bolle (in Lleshi, 2020) says: through meeting the other, you become yourself. Masschelein (in Biesta, 2016, p.146) tells “that we became immunised for the call of the other, where we put up our fences, close our eyes and ears—and perhaps even our hearts—and eradicate the very risk of being interrupted by the other, the risk of being addressed by the other, of being put into question by the other”. As Biesta (2016) says education ought to be risky. We see vulnerability as a strength. Education has to focus on ‘disarmament’. We need to keep the child and ourselves as professionals open for the other and otherness (Biesta, 2016) To create an all-inclusive pedagogical climate, identity is a central pedagogical concept.

The need for a conscious narrative identity

Narratives can make a complex and ever-changing notion as identity meaningful. The narrative model believes that human beings express themselves through stories. Through stories a person can make his/her identity accessible (Bleyen, 2008). Inspired by the narrative principles of McAdams (2008) narratives create a temporal coherence that captures the essence of our identity at the moment we start telling the story. The story is told in social relationships what makes it important to see the (envisioned) audience. It shows to whom we belong. Stories change over time. They bare the capacity to change direction. They are cultural texts influenced by the stories that surround us. They are situated in a broader context. We all write our story influenced by the storyline of society. (McAdams, 2008)”

A context of diversity needs professionals who are aware of their own narrative. Who have insight in their own subjective reality and how it steers their perspective on the world? Important is to recognize that this worldview is not universal but formed by lived experiences and mediated by different factors like race, gender, ethnicity, social class, age... This social place in society is not neutral but connected to mechanisms of power (Tschida, 2009). Educational professionals, steered by their perspective on reality (Golombek, 2015), have significant impact on the behaviour of children in contexts of diversity (Vandenbroeck, 2001). In this context it's important that educational professionals develop insights in both their own
and children’s narrative identity (Verhaeghe, Den Haese & De Raedemaeker, 2016). Working with people in contexts of diversity needs to acknowledge the importance of narratives.

"I did miss affection in my own childhood, and I know that affection is important for children. I don't want them to miss out. It is so important that we touch them and comfort them"
(Phase 1, conversation 2, coachee 2)

**A Narrative Coaching Method as holistic approach**

“All we have is who we “are”, and this in turn shapes what we do. Being is sometimes thought of as something intangible, abstract, or even ineffable, but it is actually quite real … Being is the context from which all of our thinking and actions spring (Hargrove, 2003, p. 45)”

Narrative coaching is part of what Stelter and Law (2010) call third generation coaching. Coaching from a reflective perspective. The focus is on the exploration of values and meaning making (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020). Values are the implicit foundation of action, connecting actions and conviction. A lot of the time we are not conscious of our values. “They will usually lie dormant under the surface of action (Stelter, 2017, p. 338)”.

‘The narrative coaching method’ (Verhaeghe et al., 2017) showed the potential of using narratives in professionalisation. It’s hard to professionalize without paying attention to norms and values and the recognition that everyone is determined by his/her unique view on the world (Verhaeghe, Den Haese & De Raedemaeker, 2016). Personal identity is at the core of professional identity. Therefore, the narrative coaching method focusses on norms and values of the professional, rather than the typical coaching methods that are goal or problem oriented (Stelter, 2009). An Internal Compass steers the actions of professionals. Their ideas about education, professional role and child image influence behaviour and intentions (Golombek, 2017; Vanasse & Kelchtermans, 2014).

These ideas are formed by experiences obtained throughout life. They are co-created through the interaction of past, present and future. Especially in educational professions these influences are unmistakable (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020). To understand actions and convictions the identity of the professional must be taken into account. The narrative coaching method creates
a sociocultural awareness which can be the start for the creation of alternative narratives. Through co- and reconstruction of our stories we can grow (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020). So educational professionals can grow when they are invited to (co-) create and explore new stories. In extension changes in attitudes and beliefs become possible (Stelter, 2007).

Coach: why aren’t you a cat person?
Coachee: I don’t like the independence of the cat. I rather have a dog, who comes to you, who needs you. Now that I think about it, it’s like the difference between babies and toddlers. I find it important that children need me.

Coach: You find it important that children need you …
Coachee: Yes. does this mean I need them to …
(Phase 2, conversation 1, coachee 2)

The narrative coaching method uses two phases: ‘the telling of the story’ and ‘bringing the story in the here-and-now’ (Verhaeghe et al., 2017). The first phase focuses on insight in the subjective reality (identity awareness) and the second phase positions the story in the broader context (socio-cultural awareness). Throughout the coaching process the narrative attitude is conditional.

The Narrative Attitude

The narrative attitude (figure 2) is a tool to reflect, it guides the coach during the coaching sessions (Verhaeghe et al., in Verhaeghe, Wastijn & De Raedemaeker, 2018). The role of the coach evolves from a facilitator to confronter and co-constructor. To support the coach in enabling the coachee in self-reflection about the norms and values that are central in his or her life and to authorize the coach to confront the coachee with his/her story, this attitude is needed.
Narrative collaborative approaches are chosen because of their focus on *dialogue and social interaction*. Identity is a co-construction between teller and listener. When we become aware of the storylines that determine us, we can find alternative stories to compose our identity (Freeman, 1993). The social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with *tension and conflict*. Struggles are needed for people to come to new understandings and in doing so creating enrichment of their own ideologies (Bakhtin, 1981).

Ideological becoming refers to the ways in which we develop our beliefs, values, and ideas, or more broadly our way of viewing the world (Tschida, 2009). The creation of an ideological environment characterized by *multiple diverse voices* is one of the goals in the developed coaching method. This environment offers challenges as well as opportunities for expanding educational professionals’ understanding of the world (Tschida, 2009). Part of the process of ideological becoming involves this encounter with multiple voices. The changing role of the coach from facilitator to confronter and eventually co-creator allows the narrative space to
change. Changing from *a save holding container to a mirror of the self* and eventually ‘a voice of multiperspectivity.

Narrative methods support professionals and their organization to work with the diversity of society. In a globalised world we must learn to accept, or even better appreciate multiversity, which means the ability to regard different worldviews and perspectives of others as an invitation to enrich one’s own attitudes towards life and work (Stelter, 2009, p. 210). A *diversattude* is needed (Verhaeghe, Rosiers, Den Haese & Biesmans, 2014). The *diversattude* is an attitude that enables professionals to act in a strong way in contexts of diversity and to create an all-inclusive climate for children and youngsters to be and to belong (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020).

**A Diversattude that enables professionals to develop an all-inclusive environment**

The *diversattude* (figure 03) is a 5 attitudes concept based on the narrative attitude, literature and the interviews with the school leaders (Wastijn, 2018; Verhaeghe et al, 2017 in Verhaeghe & Wastijn, 2018). All 5 attitudes (1) Socio-Cultural Awareness, (2) Empathy, (3) Respect, (4) Curiosity and (5) Openness are perceived as dynamic, equal and the basis to work towards an all-inclusive climate.
The diversattude is an attitude that enables professionals to use diversity as a strength. Every part interconnects. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is a way of being that supports professionals to be enriched by the encounter of ‘the other’ and have reciprocal effect on ‘the other’. Starting from socio-cultural awareness we are able to embrace vulnerability and openness to the otherness of the other in an unconditional way (Süle, 2006). By letting go of our own prejudice and know that we know nothing (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) we can be curious about the other. This enables us to be an intelligent reader of another person's story and try to (narrative) imagine what it means to be in somebody’s else's shoes (Nussbaum, 2016). To think with an enlarged mentality which enables us to go visiting ‘the other’ (Arendt, in Von Wright, 2002). This kind of empathy is the bases for real meeting. We have to grow comfortable with the unknown (Malaguzzi, 1993) and believe that by giving voice to all, by taking others seriously and respecting them, we see the other, recognise him as a fellow human being and grow together (Korczak, 2007).

“Why can’t you be normal like all the other children?”
(pilot A, observation 2)

To enable professionals to work on their diversattude, the narrative coaching starts with creating awareness about the own story. When the professional is aware of his/her story, the coach
creates an environment in which the professional is confronted with their biases, to let them deconstruct how their perspective on the world is composed and developed. This results in meeting alternative perspectives and can inspire to look outward and to question and challenge some long-held perspectives (Tschida, 2009).

“you have to talk Dutch
I know only Arabic
I will not understand”
The child stops talking
(Pilot A, observation 4)

This awareness influences understanding and comprehension for the narrative space of young children and their families. It enhances an openness to other stories and in doing so it is crucial for working with diverse groups and cannot be separated from the other aspects of the diversattude.

A narrative competent system

Working in a competent system

The European Commission suggested in 2013 that the professional profile of all teaching professions and the preparation for social diversity should be revised and strengthened (European Commission, 2013). However, the individual competences of educational practitioners are crucial, individual competences seem not enough. A competent workforce needs to take shape in a competent system. This includes collaboration between individuals (level 1), teams (level 2), institutions (level 3) as well as the governance at policy levels (level 4) (Urban et al., 2012). The competent system implies that, if we want to improve the quality and the diversattude we need to work on these different interconnected levels.

"It is always a team. You are a team that is responsible for the evolution of your pupils. And I think it is very important that we face those challenges [in education and with diversity] as a team. [...] You cannot solve all those as an individual teacher. But if you act as a team it can be easier because you can help each other and make each other stronger. [...]"

(Interview manager 05)
Similar data is generated from the interviews of both managers and educational professionals. Managers consider their own competences and attitudes to depend on the level of the individual teacher, also the inter-institutional level and the level of policy makers is frequently mentioned. They shape their role as a manager as a response on the practice of the teachers as well as they are influenced by the influence of the educational umbrella organizations on school policies. This influence is perceived as both giving direction and limiting their options. And in terms of diversity, the influences from the upper levels of the competent system concerns mostly language, religious symbols and meals.

All managers of schools expect from their own attitude to be exemplary for their teachers, as the teachers also expect this example from their managers. New teachers also have similar expectations from their more experienced colleagues. In some schools, the topic on how to work with diversity is part of the school policy. Some implemented diversity bottom-up from the ideas of the teachers. Another school implemented the topic because of how the manager envisioned the school policy. Some did it more top-down because of the inter-institutional policy of the umbrella organization responsible for their school.

All respondents said that some of their colleagues would benefit from additional support and coaching in their own diversattude individually as well on the level of the organization or team. Only 1 respondent confirmed (s)he could learn more about it and could use some extra support. That is why the narrative, collaborative & interdisciplinary approach (see below), aims to influence all layers of the system.

The narrative of the child in a narrative competent system

Education as inspired by Arendt (2009/1958) has the purpose to invite children to come into the world. In this respect education has a focus on the being of children, their newness, their natality. Every child has the capacity to bring something new into the world (Arendt, 2009/1958). This is defined in the new sociology of childhood as ‘the being child’. Here the child is seen as a social actor, actively constructing childhood. In contrast, the ‘becoming’ child is seen as an ‘adult in the making’, lacking competencies of the ‘adult’, that he or she will ‘become’ (Uprichard, 2008). Starting from the children’s rights perspective, all children can or should be able to claim their place in this world. Not to take over the world, but to transform it and make it suitable for a new generation.
Based on the data of the observations and art-based data-collection insight in the narrative of the child was established. These narratives showed the potential of engaging children in practice-based research. Children are sometimes forgotten in topics that especially concern them. But the competent system does not involve children as an active actor. This research wants to introduce an enhanced competent system that puts the child in the centre (figure 4).

![Figure 4 The narrative layers of the competent system](image)

Moreover, since the research focuses on the field of education, where the (well)being and development of the child is the goal and aim of the organizations, we chosen to put the narrative of the child in its centre. Doing so, a system layered with narratives instead of levels is introduced. Working with narratives creates the opportunity to coach on what is important and present in educational practices. It gives the opportunity to address beliefs, attitudes, views, visions… at all levels. This makes it possible to create a new narrative appreciating the multiversity of all involved.

**A narrative, collaborative & interdisciplinary approach to coach in a narrative competent system**

Contexts of diversity needs people with diversattude. To establish this attitude a narrative, collaborative and interdisciplinary coaching approach is needed. The overall aim of this
approach is to enhance the diversattude of all involved in the narrative competent system. Inspired by the individual narrative collaborative coaching method (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020) a combination of individual and team coaching at all organisational levels will be set up. The active involvement of children and their context will be assured. The narrative, collaborative and interdisciplinary approach therefore exists of three interconnected cycles (1-2-3) and a bigger one connecting all (cycle 0).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 6 Blueprint of the coaching

**Cycle 0: Building trust** is the preface and starting point for the coaching method. It aims to create a safe environment where coach and coachees get to know each other.

**Cycle 1: Telling the story** focuses on getting insight in the subjective reality of individuals, the team and group dynamic involved. In doing so identity-awareness will be established. Exploring practice to get insight in the narrative of the child, using observation and art-based methods, will also be part of the first cycle.

**Cycle 2: Meeting the other** will bring ‘people’ (different generations, disciplines, gender, socio-cultural backgrounds, theoretical frameworks, …) together to confront and contest the own perspective and invite professionals to see different worldviews and perspectives of others as an invitation to enrich one’s own. The creation of an ideological environment characterized by multiple divers’ voices will be established. *Meeting ‘the other’* will be used as a means for reflection. In this meeting imaginative techniques like metaphors, art, poetry and play will be used to strengthen narrative imagination (Verhaeghe & Den Haese, 2020). An artistic approach can, through imagination, motivate individuals to argue and debate with nuance and
understanding. Intercultural exchange will not succeed unless the importance of imaginative element is fully appreciated (Colpaert, 2009).

**Cycle 3: Sustainability** wants to facilitate a durable effect of the coaching. A new multiperspective narrative will be written in co-construction. Making choices for the future, translating these choices into structural organisational changes and leadership that valorises diversattude.

## Conclusion and Discussion

In this paper we wanted to introduce and explain why a narrative, interdisciplinary and collaborative *method of coaching* in an *amplified competent system* is a new and interesting way to enable professionals to work in *contexts of diversity*. This method was developed based upon academic literature and data collected in practices. It took preconditions in account, such as the element that working on the diversattude of all actors of the narrative competent system for the success of the approach and to reach sustainable change. It’s believed that professionals with a diversattude will be able to create an all-inclusive pedagogical climate where children, regardless of their background, can flourish. Children will take active part as researchers in the further process. children are given a central role in transforming the world and making it suitable for the next generation. However, we are warned by respondents with a more policy-oriented job description (such as principals or student support services) that working in the diverse governmental reality of Brussels (as explained in the introduction) is considered as extra challenging and making more local collaboration between schools less evident. But if we don’t invest at the same time on the individual, the team, the (inter-) institutional and governance layer, the impact will always be partial.

In future research a narrative collaborative and interdisciplinary approach will be implemented and evaluated in pilot organisations. An expert focus group (containing actors of every layers of the narrative competent system) will be consulted before, during and after the implementation.

Educational professionals have a strong impact on how children develop a strong identity and positive self-image (Vandenbroeck, 2001). Creating sense of belonging in pedagogical climate is conditional to enable children to establish strong relationships. All children and adults have the right to develop in an environment of equity and with respect for diversity (UN declaration
of the rights of the child, 1989). Diversity is a reality. Arendt (2009/1958) tells us that we are all equal in the fact that we are all different and unique. In this regard we believe that the diversattude is not only an attitude that is needed in (educational) context of diversity but is an attitude that is desirable for all human interactions.

Acknowledgments and Declaration of interest statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors. We want to thank all actors involved in the research.

Notes

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Bert Wastijn gives lectures for the bachelor early childhood education (and care) and pre-school teacher training program. His expertise is in communication and coaching, professionalisation and working on intercultural competences. His aim as researcher is to be an actor in social educational research.

References


Cinzia Zadra\textsuperscript{a,*} and Simona Bartoli Kucher\textsuperscript{b}. Preparing students for diversity: using transcultural literature to foster intercultural competence in Higher Education

This paper presents a multidisciplinary and transcultural project which aims to promote intercultural competence in Higher Education students and, for this purpose, we suggest a specific literary genre, ‘transcultural literature’. The term, ‘intercultural literature’ emphasizes the interactive character of cultural influences, helps us to understand the processes of formation of hybrid and multilayered identities and suggests a mindset between worlds and different languages and between the boundaries of different identities. The second matrix, to which our project refers, recognizes the narrative tradition as a fundamental source to cultivate imagination, critical thinking and the ability to imagine other worlds and other dimensions of being. The study refers to two main sources of data collection: a series of reflections, in the form of journal entries, written by students as part of their assignment. The results provide valuable insights about the integration of literary text in the reflective process for development of intercultural competences.

Keywords: Higher Education; transcultural literature; imagination; intercultural competence; reflective journals

Introduction

According to many publications (UNESCO 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016; EU 2017; OECD 2018) there is a growing awareness that intercultural competence is a relevant resource and a key competence which supports interactions in today’s culturally diverse society. The purpose of many international documents is to signal and recommend a greater attention to the multiplicity of cultures of belonging, to the intersection of several, potentially different, belongings and to a multilingual, multi-religious and multicultural dimension of living together (Barret et al. 2014; Huber and Reynolds 2014).
This article proposes an interdisciplinary and transcultural project that aims to promote intercultural competence in Higher Education students and suggests a specific literary genre, *transcultural literature*.

The intensity of social and cultural changes requires that educational disciplines confront each other and interact with each other, enriching themselves with methods and prospective horizons to support practice and it also calls for a researcher to be not only a collaborative partner, but “a reflective ‘observant participant’ who helps make visible practices, meanings and contradictions that often become invisible to those closest to the action” (Vossoughi and Gutiérrez 2014, 616). Research should never lose sight of collaboration between researchers from different backgrounds and this must be supported, not only by practice, but also by a multi-prospective and multi-disciplinary vision which are the key figures for the training of future teachers and professionals in education and social work. It seems to us that it is important today to activate, in Higher Education, a circle of exchange and expansion between literary studies, social sciences and teaching practices in order to connect training to society and promote its active role (Engeström 1991, 2015; Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanič 2000; Gutiérrez 2008).

We present a research project we designed for Higher Education students in social work and in education in South Tyrol (Italy) and Styria (Austria). South Tyrol is a trilingual and tricultural autonomous region close to Austria, whereas Styria borders on Slovenia and has set up many economic and cultural links with Slovenia and Italy. The Social Work students are of different mother tongues (Italian, Ladin and German, the languages of the territory and also other languages) attending a trilingual course (Italian German and English) of social work at the faculty of education of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen, while the students of the University of Graz are German speaking student teachers of language, in particular of Italian as a foreign language and some of them have several mother tongues (i.e. Croatian, Albanian, Romanian).

Our project concerns the value and significance of transcultural narratives for the development of intercultural skills beyond the disciplinary boundaries. Reconciling identity, equality and pluralism orientation for a changing democratic society implies countering prejudices, discrimination and incitement to hatred and accompanying students to explore the concepts of intercultural competence by activating an operational intercultural
competence development with a strong dimension of social and civic interaction and by making them citizens capable of interacting in the multiplicity of cultural perspectives and of managing differences understood as enrichment and opportunity (Deardorff 2015, 2020). Students are considered as multipliers of intercultural competences in a process of lifelong competence development of mobilization towards openness, critical reflection and empathy in a continually shifting world of difference. Intercultural competence development is conceived as a shared synthesis along a line of progress from the individual level to interaction and action (Deardorff 2006, 2015), and provides support to multidimensional global competence, with the focus on the ability to interact in contexts, to understand others’ perspectives and world views and acting for the common good and sustainability (OECD 2018, 4).

**Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework to which our work refers is outlined through the intersection of perspectives belonging to different disciplines and presents a network of theoretical suggestions, a network whose meshes are strengthened through the transcultural texts chosen as instruments of our project. The theoretical perspectives are outlined on some founding concepts: imagination, narrative imagination, transculturality and transcultural narrative. Starting from the concept of imagination in John Dewey (1910), which emphasizes the links between imagination and thought and gives imagination the ability to go beyond reality and thus to think and learn in a reflective way, we also propose, through Martha Nussbaum’s reflections on narrative imagination, a transformation of Higher Education’s educational practices from traditional teaching to student-centred teaching that facilitates social learning and the development of skills related to intercultural understanding. Furthermore, following the concept of transculturality (Welsch 1999, 2000, 2009, 2012, 2017) it has to be referred to the interactive character of cultural influences and to the processes of formation of hybrid and multilayered identities.

With *transcultural literature* we mean literary works written in a certain language by writers with a multilayered and hybrid identity and in a complex cultural, individual and linguistic constellation. The term ‘transcultural literature’ also suggests a mindset that moves between worlds and different languages and between the boundaries of different identities (Bartoli Kucher 2019) and is connected to an integrated perspective of a linguistic model of
stories and 'documentary narratives' embedded in a transcultural and symbolic communicative context.

*At the roof of imagination*

Dewey's concept of imagination provides interesting insights on how to create the conditions for an inclusive class and the ability to move in a situation of cultural diversity. In *How We Think*, Dewey (1910) explains the role of imagination in thought, stressing that there is “imagination and observation in every mental enterprise” (223). The function of imagination, the philosopher continues, is to give a clear vision to the dark and to give a vision of reality and possibility. Considering various possibilities is fundamental for human thought because an idea after it has formed is put to the test by acting on it, openly if possible, otherwise in the imagination. He goes on to say that the purpose of imagination is “clear insight into the remote, the absent, the obscure” (224) and its role is to imagine reality and possibility. Imagination is therefore an absolutely necessary element in the reconstruction of one's own experience, it allows one to go beyond one's concrete experience and to imagine alternative realities and possibilities. The reconstruction of experience presupposes the functioning of the imagination, especially when we are faced with an artistic work, and is a way of seeing and feeling things as they form an integral whole, the great and generous fusion of interests at the point where the mind comes into contact with the world, “when old and familiar things are made new in experience, there is imagination” (Dewey 1934, 267).

*Martha Nussbaum’s narrative imagination*

Martha Nussbaum deepens the discourse through the concept of narrative imagination and we can see how imagination allows us to engage with the lives of others. Nussbaum explores the value of the narrative tradition as a fundamental source to cultivate imagination, critical thinking and the ability to imagine the situation of others, a capacity that is essential for a successful democracy, a necessary cultivation of our “inner eyes” (2010, 108). Narrative imagination is defined as “the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have”
(Nussbaum 2010, 96). Already, in 1997, Nussbaum, in *Cultivating Humanity*, dedicated great attention to intercultural education, understood as moral education achieved through highlighting emotions and imagination. For Nussbaum, intercultural education includes referring to a political and social reality too, that is animated by different identities and increasingly interdependent cultures. Talking about intercultural education means understanding the relationship between equality and difference, between tradition and renewal and, as a consequence, working on the level of reflective exercise. Thus, she proposes not only to know its roots but also to know how to interpret different contexts and traditions. However, it is not only new school and academic curricula that are sufficient, but it is also important to give a place in education to the narrative imagination. Narrative imagination gives us the ability to think ourselves into the shoes of others, to understand their emotions and to refine one's sympathetic sensitivity (Nussbaum 2010, 121).

Nussbaum argues that, in higher education, narrative imagination represents an essential aspect for the preparation of critical thinkers, capable of changing their habits and beliefs and of transcending their individual egocentric and ethnocentric positions, and thus becoming competent for the development of a deeply democratic society.

According to Nussbaum, language learning certainly represents the possibility of developing cultural humility because it allows us to see how people conceive “the world in a different way and how each translation is an imperfect interpretation” (2010, 5), but literature gives density to human figures and their stories allowing us to see the other, the stranger who is outside but who is also within us, as Julia Kristeva notes, “our disturbing otherness, our uncanny strangeness” (1991, 192). Narrative imagination opens up the perspective of others in a self-aware way, in an oscillatory movement between understanding others and understanding oneself. Seeing the perspective of others is a process that includes deconstructing, transcending our beliefs and that involves us as intellectually and morally responsible actors.

Nussbaum affirms the value of compassion for civil responsibility and therefore, the introduction in school and university of works that develop sympathetic understanding, have a political purpose, that of being citizens of the whole world (2010, 79).
Researching on the concepts of transculturality and transcultural narrative

For some years now we have been conducting a project which aims at collecting and analysing data on the use of transcultural literary texts to foster intercultural competence in Higher Education. We started from the hypothesis that a higher education class represents a sort of third space, a place of dialogue between languages and cultures (Kramsch 1993, 2011), a meeting place, which for learners could assume the function of raising awareness of the plurality and hybridity of languages and cultures - and therefore of identity - determined in contemporary society by the migration processes (Bartoli Kucher 2019, 13). Our work is based on the hypothesis that transcultural literary texts represent a resource that is still neglected and, for this reason, is to be enhanced in the training of university students. We have placed the evaluation of the intercultural potential of transcultural literary texts at the centre of our research, in order to gain relevant data for the evaluation of curricular standards in the various university syllabi and to identify new approaches in order to recognize and consider diversity and to observe, listen to, and communicate in an intercultural and transdisciplinary way.

With the term 'transcultural narrative texts' we mean literary texts published in our century in the interstices between languages and cultures (Bhabha 1994, 4), from experiences of migration - lived in the first person or linked to experiences close to one's own experience - often in autobiographical stories in which there are multilingual codes. Their authors cannot be traced back to a particular national literary space, because they have a complex dimension that connects them for their social, linguistic and cultural specificity to multiple and borderline spaces (Schulze-Engler 2002).

As far as the concept of transculturality is concerned, it has to be referred to the reflections with which, in 1992, Wolfgang Welsch opened the discussion in the discourse of cultural studies, clarifying that the concept of transculturality corresponds, better than the one of interculturality, to the interweaving, to the interpenetration, to the hybridization of cultures (Welsch 1999, 2000, 2012, 2017). Both on the macro level of society and on the micro level of individuals, are patchwork identities that dominate this type of reality, in which “a whole range of cultural models have found a place” (Welsch 1999, 5). With
reference to the research paradigm presented here, it is the vision of the 'network' (Welsch 1999, 203) that constitutes the term 'umbrella' that collects and incorporates the characteristics of transcultural literary texts. According to Bhabha, it is necessary to move from the specificities of the subject, from categories such as race, gender, generation, institutional situation, geopolitical environment and others, because the intention to “think beyond narratives of original and initial subjectivities” (Bhabha 1994, 2) is fundamental, to put at the centre “those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (2).

The transcultural narratives are united by their cultural hybridism and neoplurilingualism, by that “fourth axis” (Vedovelli 2015, 95) of the linguistic space in which, alongside the standard language, alongside the dialects and the minority languages of ancient settlement, immigrant languages are being inserted. This kind of text can enhance the ability of learners to put themselves in the shoes of others, thus relativizing their point of view and developing empathy, sensitivity and social participation (Nünning 2007). Teaching is to take a different perspective from one's own aims “to make learners aware of the subjectivity and relativity of their own point of view, encouraging them to look beyond their own” (Nünning 2007, 135) and to be democratic citizens who consider themselves as world citizens with attention and care for humanity. Understanding stories and telling stories are important cultural practices that, focusing on both individual and collective situations and experiences, allow you to see and perceive what people from different cultures think and feel, while interpreting the values and motivations that underlie their actions and displaying compassion and understanding of other people’s lives (Hallet and Nünning 2009; Nünning and Nünning 2007). This is a possibility that emerges particularly in texts where a clear documentary trace is recognizable; a possibility that is easier to pursue if the texts use, from a linguistic point of view, a relatively simple, familiar register that underlines the link with reality. Contemporary Italian literature, in particular Italian-speaking transcultural literature (Kleinhans and Schwaderer 2013) presents many such texts, classified as examples of 'documentary realism', and places them in the context of a paradigm shift in contemporary fiction, characterized by the transition from ‘fiction’ to 'non-fiction' (Donnarumma 2014, 117). These are narrative texts that can represent important corpora for the processes of developing intercultural competences, precisely because, on the one hand, they decline forms of descriptive and
communicative expression involving, on the other hand, the basis of their potential for authenticity (both fictitious and factual) at the emotional and reflective level.

We aim to demonstrate that transcultural literary texts, united by cultural hybridism and plural linguistic codes, represent the possibilities of cultivating the imagination, critical thinking and “the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person” (Nussbaum 2010, 7). The stories included in these texts resemble those of reality and focus on plural and multilingual codes and generate strong attention and deep involvement from the learners.

Carmine Abate, an Italian author belonging to the linguistic minority of Arbëreshë, with strong experiences of migration between different places in Germany and Northern Italy, describes his transcultural experience:

Mio padre trascorreva l’inverno in paese perché il cantiere stradale, in cui lavorava ad Amburgo, chiudeva grazie a Schlechtwetter e riapriva, di solito, ai primi di marzo.

Anche se non conoscevo il significato, da bambino amavo la parola Schlechtwetter perché l’associavo al periodo più zuccherigno dell’anno, quello della mia famiglia unita. E con il passare del tempo mi ero convinto che Schlechtwetter fosse un padrone buono, che mandava un suo fatigatòre a svernare in paese. Perciò restai deluso quando mio padre me ne tradusse il senso, dopo avermi preso in giro: “Sei proprio bala bala, come i tedeschi chiamano chi tiene la capa un pochicello sballata. Schlechtwetter non è una persona, ma moti i lig, il cattivo tempo”. (Abate 2016, 45)

My father spent winter in the village because the road construction site he worked for in Hamburg closed due to Schlechtwetter, and generally reopened in early March.

Even though I did not know the meaning, as a child I loved the word Schlechtwetter as I associated it with the sweetest time of year, when the family was reunited. As time went by, I convinced myself that Schlechtwetter was a kind employer who allowed his laborers to spend winters in the village.

And so I was greatly disappointed when my father explained what the word actually meant, after a gentle ribbing: “You’re such a bala bala as the Germans say when one is a bit out of whack. Schlechtwetter isn’t a person but moti i lig, a spate of bad weather”.

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1 Translated in English by Laila Wadia
Thus in the short story, *Living by addition*, Abate concludes his reflections on the end of his migratory paths and discovers within himself a “suspended gaze” (Abate 2010, 144), free of thorns and resentment, a gaze without prejudices that leads him to realize that he has become the other of the other.

If for the Germans I continued to be a foreigner; for the foreigners, an Italian; for the Italians, a southern or terrone; for the southerners, a Calabrian; for the Calabrians, an Albanian ‘ghiegghiu’, as they call the arbëreshë, a German or a Trentino; for the Germans and the Trentino, one uprooted, for me I was simply me, a synthesis of all those definitions, a person who lived in several cultures and languages, not uprooted at all, indeed with more roots, even if the youngest had not yet sunk in the ground but flying in the air.

Abate recovers the pride and beauty of his mother tongue, the ancient Albanian spoken in Calabria since the end of the 15th century by Albanian refugees who escaped from the Ottoman invasion and he allows himself to glimpse the similarity with today's migrations. It traces the immutability and urgency of migrations, the lack of alternatives and the need to cultivate dreams for one's children, to believe in culture, freedom and justice. The memory of experiences illuminates the present and living the lives of others through the texts allows us to become different, to know how to live, as Abate affirms, “with an enlightened head”, valuing hybridity (*miscidanza* is the term used by Abate, in itself a hybrid word) and “the middle lands” (Abate, public lecture at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen, December 13, 2019).

This is how Layla Wadia, an Indian writer who lives in Italy and writes in Italian, describes the richness of contamination in the introduction to the work *Mondopentola*, a collection of short stories by immigrant authors in Italy.

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2 Translated in English by Laila Wadia.
Amo le contaminazioni. Senza mescolanze non esisterebbe alcuna forma di vita, perché non ci sarebbero né acqua da bere, né aria da respirare, né fuoco per scaldarci e cucinare. Tutti questi elementi sono nient’altro che abbracci tra atomi, una fratellanza tra sostanze diverse, la contaminazione di elementi puri che da soli non riescono a dar forma all’essenziale, perché il miracolo della vita è dovuto al meticciato.

Senza contaminazioni l’Italia non avrebbe il suo amatissimo piatto nazionale, gli spaghetti al pomodoro, perché:

preparando un piatto di spaghetti al pomodoro sintetizziamo (con un gesto che oggi è segno dell’identità italiana) il felice incontro tra una tecnologia produttiva messa a punto nella Sicilia araba del medioevo e un prodotto americano importato in Europa dai conquistatori spagnoli (Montanari 2004, copertina interna)

Senza meticciato la lingua italiana non si sarebbe arricchita di magici neologismi come “maroggia”, metà mare, metà spiaggia. E senza l’abbraccio geografico, linguistico e culturale tra genti, non esisterebbe l’interessantissimo filone della letteratura migrante. (Wadia 2007, 9)

I love contamination. I love contaminations. Life would not exist if there were no mixing and blending: no water to drink, no air to breathe, no fire to keep us warm and for cooking. These natural elements are but atoms embracing each other, a brotherhood of substances, a contamination of pure atoms which, on their own, would not be able to form these essential elements. The miracle of life is achieved through contamination, blending, mixing, métissage.

Without contamination, Italy would not know its beloved national dish - spaghetti with tomato sauce – because:

Preparing a dish of spaghetti with tomato sauce means (with what is now a sign of Italian identity) the happy meeting of a technique that was perfected in Sicily during Arab rule and Medieval times and a product imported to Europe from the Americas by Spanish conquerors (Montanari 2004, cover).

Without blending and hybridizing, Italian would lack magic neologisms such as “maroggia”, half sea, half beach. And without the geographic, linguistic and cultural embrace of peoples, the fascinating branch of migrant literature would not have come into being3.

Belonging seems redesigned as such by an emphasis on territoriality, pluralism and multiple identities (Bauman, 1998). Languages, identities, cultures, food seem to live on forms

3Translated in English by Laila Wadia.
of transnationalism, growing and mutating into a social field of networks. This means intercepting dynamic transnational trajectories, living in mobile and multiple relationships and reframing literacy as a social practice situated within the different domains of lives (Gutiérrez, 2008).

Another example of transcultural literature is given by Igiaba Scego who represents herself as an inhabitant of multiple cultural affiliations. To be at home means for her to accept an identity made of mobile life trajectories, of expanded and transnational cultural heritage and identities, of alternative maps. Scego is an Italian writer in a country, Italy that has not recognized and has not reworked its colonial past. Her entire existence is more than a monocultural or in-between existence: it is the existence of those who live with the pain of loss and tears, it is the intensity of survival and the hope of collective stories and memories that transcend personal and national boundaries.


Questo non significa che gli italiani siano stati peggio di altri popoli colonizzatori. Ma erano come gli altri. Gli italiani hanno stuprato, ucciso, sbeffeggiato, inquinato, depredato, umiliato i popoli con cui sono venuti in contatto. Hanno fatto come gli inglesi, i francesi, i belgi, i tedeschi, gli americani, gli spagnoli, i portoghesi. Ma in molti di questi paesi dopo la fine della Seconda guerra mondiale c’è stata una discussione, ci si è accapigliati, gli scambi di vedute sono stati aspri e impetuosi; ci si è interrogati sull’imperialismo e i suoi crimini; sono stati pubblicati studi; il dibattito ha influenzato la produzione letteraria, saggistica, filmica, musicale. In Italia invece silenzio. Come se nulla fosse stato. (Scego 2010, 17-18)

Italy was my country. Full of flaws, sure, but my country. I have always felt it deeply mine. As is Somalia, which is full of flaws. Saying "I love Italy" wouldn't have taken. It wouldn't have been considered a plausible defence.
To explain that working with the Italian language was also a titanic undertaking. And it was better not to flaunt my messy love life. So, I had learned to talk about Italy only to those who could understand it.

The rest of the time I just mumbled rather than answered. But they were right about one thing: Italy had forgotten its colonial past. It had forgotten that it had put Somalis, Eritreans, Libyans and Ethiopians through hell. It had erased that history with an easy blow.

That doesn't mean that the Italians were worse than other colonizing peoples. But they were like the others. The Italians raped, killed, mocked, polluted, plundered, and humiliated the peoples with whom they came into contact. They did, like the English, the French, the Belgians, the Germans, the Americans, the Spanish and the Portuguese. But in many of these countries, after the end of the Second World War, there was a discussion, there were quarrels, the exchanges of views were harsh and impetuous; there were questions about imperialism and its crimes; studies were published; the debate influenced literary, non-fiction, film and musical production. In Italy, on the other hand, silence. As if nothing had happened.

Methodology

As far as strategies for promoting skills and competences are concerned, we refer to the importance of critical thinking and reflection (Merizow 1991, 2000). Critical reflection is the key to the process of personal transformation to establish new points of view, transform our perspective or transform our ethnocentric habit (Merizow 1997, 7). For this reason, we have given priority to teaching methods that encourage learners to become actively involved in discovery, challenge, reflection and co-construction of meaning (Byram 1997, 2009; Deardorff 2011), both with regard to the reflections on the potential offered by the texts for the development of intercultural competences and with regard to the evaluation of the process of developing these competences.

The reading practice has been conducted in different ways: silent reading, reading aloud, reading in small groups, interactive or dialoguing reading, reflective reading, public reading during meetings with authors who read their texts, recited or narrated genesis and writing practices. These different ways of reading have been introduced with the awareness that, even at university, there is a need for a transformative turning point with respect to didactics by proposing an alternative approach to literary texts to the semiotic or narrative

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4 Translated in English by Laila Wadia.
one that often makes them an isolated activity of deciphering. The reading practices are proposed as a multiple and heterogeneous reading that is based on the consideration of literary narration as an instrument of thought, a resource to make us participate in multiple combinations of meaning, inaccessible otherwise because of the limits in the time and space of our existence, and shows us its infinite possibilities, contaminating our imagination. The reading of the texts and the way they are read correspond to an awareness of the educational role of literature (Marcé 2013), also in the construction of intercultural competences, putting cognitive and emotional resources into action because a book is “a reserve of dense, complete arcs that leave, in memory, the mark of their potency, from then on always poised to seize another object” (Marcé 2013, 228).

With regard to reflection on the development and evaluation of intercultural competences, many scholars recommend the introduction of portfolios or journals, which are generally based on personal reflection and the self-evaluation of the learner and, on the one hand, facilitate the intuitive becoming aware of reflections and attitudes which are not otherwise easy to grasp and, on the other hand, contribute to the development of personal reflection and self-perception, qualities considered as essential competences in intercultural education (Byram 1997; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Deardorff 2009, 2011).

We used as source for data collection a series of online forum entries written by the students as part of their assignment: we collected 320 entries and each entry contains between 60 and 180 words. Forum entries contain reflections about the meaning and value of the texts and, in particular, the meaning for oneself of the author's experience or thoughts. It is a question of reflecting on transcultural writings, indicating whether this particular type of text:

- develops the ability to see the point of view of other people who are in between languages and cultures;
- allows confrontation of human frailties and vulnerabilities and the possibility of cooperation and reciprocity;
- develops sensitivity and empathy towards others;
- develops “authentic knowledge” about minorities, different cultures;
- promotes awareness of multiple and hybrid identities;
- promotes self-discovery;
- promotes reflections on the dynamic and fluid dimension of intercultural competences;
- promotes attitudes of openness and respect in the confrontation of individuals and those belonging to different cultures (Nussbaum, 2010).

A large amount of critical reflection collected in our courses is subject to a content analysis that leads to the identification of the categories and the relationships between them. This methodologically controlled empirical analysis approach includes, not only the analysis of explicit content, but also different levels of content. First, themes and paths of thought emerge and then, through an interpretation of the textual context, the latent content (Mayring 2002, 2014). The collected material is considered incorporated in its communicative context and interpreted according to analytical rules that first generate a number of terms and sentence-codes, grouped into categories in a subsequent coding phase.

**Results**

The obtained results seem to provide valuable insights about the integration of literary text in the development of intercultural competences and help us to gain new data about the validity and the consistency of self-assessing methodologies of intercultural competence. The analysis of the collected data so far indicates the occurrence of three interesting dimensions on students’ perspectives about the power of transcultural narrative.

**Reflections on oneself and within oneself**

The transcultural texts encourage reflection not only on oneself, on one’s aptitude for openness towards diversity but also within oneself, towards one’s own linguistic and cultural diversity and feelings of belonging. As a student noticed in a forum entry that reading the texts of intercultural writers had been the discovery of a part of herself, an unexplored but latent part.

For the first time I experienced the action of telling, with words that I did not have, the feeling of intimacy and authenticity of ideas that one feels towards one's mother tongue, even if this is
a dialect like mine. At the same time this feeling was not accompanied by a feeling of exclusion and blind ethnocentrism, as happens when we talk about “us and our language”. One can be at the same time proud of one's linguistic and cultural roots and also have a need to defend them. There is no longer an “either, or”, it is, as Carmine Abate says, living by addition.

Living the lives of others through these texts does really motivate me to read, but above all it encourages one to reflect on the memories of one's own family and ancestors as elements of the bridge to intercultural competence, because the memory of individuals is the “light that illuminates the present”, they are mixed stories of History which help to clarify the history of today (Student Boz112)

The narration of events rather than their representation seems to prevail in these texts and the students identify in the narratives the motivation to search for a meaning for their existence, they find stimuli towards processes of reflection on their own lives in which the experiences of diversity and connection with the world fade away identity and make it easier to give shape to our memories, our experiences and thus give a reading of our lives. These texts not only refine our own life stories, but allow a new dimension of experience and therefore a new reading and rewriting of the episodes of our life. The transcultural texts become a way to rediscover intuitions linked to experiences of difference and encounter the other, even the other who is in us, and to reconstruct and deepen cognitive processes in the continuation of the reading within oneself and retrospectively.

**Intimate and light reading experience**

The encounter with the texts is different from the cultural and transcultural experiences, sometimes exotic, pleasant but superficial because they are, at the same time, intimate, direct, and immediately deep.

The author manages to inspire people. His way of explaining things seems so natural that you can easily understand his message. The author doesn't mince words and says things as they are - I thought that was great. [...] Actually, I was enthusiastic about his whole lecture, but most of all the following words touched me: “gain new gazes” (Student Boz13).

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5 The most illustrative and representative examples were selected for citation purposes.
Students often stress the immediacy of the transcultural author’s message. There emerges among the students a feeling of great pleasure in reading texts that are not born from ‘emptiness’, but from living, burning discourses, from the urgency of giving voice to history, not only to beauty and invention. Transcultural texts help to live, they are not only escape, distraction, consolation, a hymn to beauty and language. Transcultural literature is understanding, discovery of new worlds, new gazes, new possibilities of imagining and organizing reality and new unexplored possibilities of encountering the other and oneself, they are texts that speak easily to us and directly with our world and there is no need to identify internal laws such as gender, register, metaphors; common practice in school during the literature lesson.

It seems that students who reflect on their involvement with transcultural texts are able to expand their experiences, to look at them in wonder and make their own and others’ thoughts speak and decipher them and to establish an inner dialogue.

That’s exactly how I see it and I think it’s very important that we always acquire new perspectives, be it through reading, through contact with others or through travelling. When we develop new gazes, we also grow as people and this growth is essential. I think that through these different perspectives you can also do a lot of good in the world. Racism arises partly from not developing new perspectives and holding on to a single perspective: this thought came to me and went deep into my mind (Student, Gra43).

The literary narrative allowed the students to entertain closer relationships even with the most alien, dense and unknown intellectual and emotional experiences and people (Bodei 2014). The texts have been proposed and read with the gaze of the ordinary reader (Todorov 2007, 25) and the reading is considered as a historically situated fact and therefore as a phenomenon which, through the active participation of the reader, can produce significant changes in his world and in his way of looking at it.

**Authentic knowledge experience**

Narration is an instrument of authentic knowledge: transcultural texts are, as a student writes, “very well written, but true, they are not a literary invention, but an experience transferred with the tools of literature but with the voice of experience” (Student Boz27) and therefore it is profound, more vivid and communicative.
The experience is seen from the inside, from the perspective of the protagonists, from the folds of the crossed events and from the need to transfer them, allowing an approach that is not that of the tourist, teacher or social worker, but that of the world citizen.

The encounters with transcultural texts are new experiences, both for the choice of the textual typology, and for the reading modes presented. These readings are, above all, a reflection on life that goes beyond literature: it is a sharing of life, it is an entering into life and it is an experience that is imagined and relived. The narrator is a narrator in the first person, and we perceive the narrative urgency, the embedded experience, the factuality of the events. Reading these texts increases and often deepens our knowledge of historical facts and allows us to acquire a political and moral awareness.

Paradoxically the history lessons in high school had never talked about the massacres linked to the fascist colonization of Somalia; from the text emerged some historical truths that were new to me and that I had to confront for the first time. I had to search the internet for information to realize that it was not about imagination and narrative creation, but also about truth, historical facts, documented and reported by Igiaba Scego as they were lived by her parents and relatives. I wanted to go deeper, I saw a film and read another book (Student Boz56).

The students seem to underline how transcultural narration is not relegated to the literature of invention but is a sort of organization of the experience in a probable, meaningful and necessary plot that goes beyond the choice of words and style but which responds to an urgent need for testimony, the preservation of memory and the process of reconstruction and reformulation of memories, concepts and visions of reality.

Conclusions and perspectives

The results of empirical research have highlighted the resource represented by in-between spaces as "new signs of identity" (Bhabha 1994, 2), their potential to determine a new awareness. The perspective is that students can foster, through the pleasure of reading, the ability to contextualize and change perspectives (Abraham 2013). Living among multiple cultures, speaking multiple languages, writing stories to give meaning to individual fragments of plural identities is a great opportunity to “live more consciously in this Europe that is
becoming increasingly multicultural” (Abate 2019). We hope that our research will contribute in some way to the realization of this shared perspective with all the writers who “mescolano mondi e aprono frontiere” (mix worlds and open frontiers) (Scego, Internazionale, July 6, 2018) and who have been and will be the promoters of our project.

The results of this research also highlight the need to work in academia and generally in education in a transdisciplinary way and the importance of reconnecting the gap between disciplines in order to collaborate on a global and deep educational discourse in order to help young people to full responsibility and awareness, to meet and listen without using disciplinary jargon, and with the perspective of participating and making them contribute to the construction of global skills to understand, accept and appreciate the views about and of others.

The multi-perspective and multi-faceted view allow one to look for connections and bridges to diversity while recognizing one’s roots and cultural identity and permit them to have the tools to interact with others, to hope for their participation and inclusion in order to live well and in a fair way together. We hope that in the future a European and international network will open up, capable of working with transcultural texts and consider their reading and dissemination as a behaviour rather than a deciphering, more an action than a meaning. It is urgent to consider the reading of these texts within what Foucault has called the ‘stylistics of existence’ (1988, 71), and therefore the experience of literature as the gateway to authentic experience forms. Here is what we should understand: the way in which ‘transcultural readers’ are led to incorporate transcultural texts as samples of existence, to use them as real ways of behaving in life, because “reading is: rewriting the text of the work within the text of our life” (Barthes 1985, 101).

**Acknowledgements**

Our sincere gratitude goes to the transcultural writers Carmine Abate, Layla Wadia and Igiaba Scego, who were actively involved in this research and gave generous and direct support to it. We would particularly like to thank Laila Wadia for her help in translations of the literary texts and for her suggestions to improve this article.
Notes

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References


Kovács Ivett Judit, Czachesz Erzsébet; Vámos Ágnes. Individual Needs Or Cultural Differences? – Inquiry Into The Beliefs of Teachers Working In Multicultural Early Years Settings (Case study in Hungarian Context)

Abstract

In Hungary, the growing heterogeneity and inequalities of the society is a relatively new phenomenon that sets up new challenges for the teachers and educational institutions. The research explores private international kindergartens in Hungary to examine their intercultural teacher communities with special focus on the possible tensions caused by cultural differences. The study is embedded in the findings of connected research areas namely the literature on transmigration, international and elite education, intercultural education and teacher communities. Within the interpretative paradigm, the research uses a mixed method approach, with a case study design, including the methods of document analysis, questionnaire, semi-structured interview and observation. The questionnaire included the short version of the Cultural Intelligence Scale by Ang and Van Dyne (2007). The study unfolds the inner world of six international kindergartens in Hungary. Every kindergarten seemed to celebrate multiculturalism and to welcome teachers arriving from different cultures, but not all of them considered their total involvement in all aspects of the pedagogical work and organizational communication. Even though the interviews revealed many examples of intercultural conflicts and tensions, none of the institutions provided intercultural training and the teachers claimed to learn intercultural competencies from their colleagues. Teachers typically look at cultural differences mainly as individual needs of children and parents and they tend to consider families as paying clients of a private kindergarten, when they strive to fulfill their needs that seems to be unusual for them. The research provides new empirical data from the Central-European Region in this research field that gains added value by its uniqueness of the almost uncovered kindergarten context.

Keywords: international kindergartens, organizational culture of international schools, intercultural teacher communities, intercultural competence, education of transmigrant children

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Introduction and context

In Hungary, the growing heterogeneity of society is a relatively new phenomenon. As a consequence of its history and location the country has never been a popular target of migrants (apart from the members of the Hungarian minorities of the neighbouring countries in the 1990s), therefore it doesn’t have a habitual or tested methodology of settling in foreigners. As taking in asylum seekers has become a critical issue in Europe and especially in Central-Europe in the last decade, the government of Hungary has built a border fence at the two Southern borders and has made various amendments to asylum legislation to hinder immigration. Due to its overall political approach towards asylum seekers and its geographical location, Hungary serves mainly as a transit country for migration towards the European Union.

The Hungarian society’s growing diversity is rather caused by transmigrant families and the increasing inclination of the thirteen ethnic minorities to take up their minority identity. This differentiation might be crucial when we are discussing educational questions that form the context of this research paper. The dilemmas, difficulties and debates about multicultural and intercultural education have appeared and developed variously and with differing foci in different societies around the world. In Hungary before the regime change in 1989 minorities were educated either in local schools amongst majority students ignoring their struggles caused by cultural differences, or in separate schools by segregating them. After the Second World War only four of the 13 historically acknowledged and registered minorities have had their own schools running bilingual education (German, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian and Slovak) (Minority Ombudsman, 2011, 10), the others have only had the chance attending Sunday schools (Torgyik and Karlovitz, 2006, 47) or having 2-3 language lessons per week of their mother tongue.

At the beginning of the 2000s the term ‘ethnicity’ has been mistakenly identified only with the Romas and the pedagogical discourse used it in the context of the questions regarding their schooling (Forray, 2003, 19) – primarily emphasizing the importance of developing anti-racist education. Even though educational experts have been stressing for two decades the importance of providing culturally responsive or intercultural pedagogy in the schools, empirical research does not reveal significant changes in the beliefs and the practice of
teachers. The inflexibility and the frequent changes in the educational system makes the adaptation of elements of intercultural education very slow and controversial (Feischmidt and Nyíri, 2006, Illés and Medgyesi, 2009, Jakab, 2011). Well-in foreigners living in the country while working for multinational corporations, tend to choose international schools for their children that have been opened primarily to provide services for transmigrant families (Kovács, Czachesz, Kovács and Vámos, 2017). These schools are also getting more and more popular amongst the families of the Hungarian elite. While schools belong to international chains do operate in Hungary, pre-primary education in foreign languages is mainly provided by enterprises or foundations owned by Hungarian entrepreneurs. These institutions addressing transmigrant and wealthy Hungarian families emphasize on their websites that they apply intercultural approach and welcome clients and teachers from all around the world. This supposed to be an unusual service in Hungary because the Act on Public Education (2011) and its implementing regulations are designed to provide a framework that suggests fostering national, patriotic spirit in the children. Even though after the regime change in 1989 the structure of the public education became much more democratic and less centralized establishing four controlling levels (Palotás, 2000), from the Act on Public Education (2011) it was centralized again and from 2013 the public educational institutions were privatized again. The National Core Program of Pre-Primary Education in harmony with the Act orders kindergartens to educate in Hungarian language (with a concession on minority kindergartens). Language teaching officially starts at primary schools at the third grade with one lesson per week, so the growing demand of middle-class parents for earlier start of language learning has opened a market for language teaching in the kindergartens. In Hungary efficient language learning is a crucial issue since Hungarian language is not spoken outside the borders and even so, according to the EUROSTAT statistics, only 42,4% of the population aged 25-64 self-reported to speak at least one or more languages (see Figure 1) that is far below the EU mean value (64,6%).
Parents believe that early start can make better chances for higher level of language knowledge. Different types of bilingual education have been started in kindergartens in the last two decades that fastened the marketization of early childhood education. Research revealed strong connections between language knowledge and educational inequalities: students with better sociocultural background living in bigger towns and cities have more access to language education of better quality (Nikolov, 2011).

Parents paying high fee for pre-school education have high demands on the quality of the care their children are getting, and they also press for greater influence on the day-to-day life of the groups. Since the governmental actions in the last decade subsequently have drained money from the education sector, the Hungarian elite tend to choose the private and/or international schools and kindergartens for their children’s. Private kindergartens competing for clients offer various services to families that local institutions cannot provide, and one of them is foreign language teaching.

The research takes an insight into six private international kindergartens located in the region of Budapest, to explore the beliefs of their multicultural teacher community regarding cultural differences and intercultural education.
Theoretical background

Transmigration, international schools and cultural competence

The term ‘migration’ originates from the Latin and refers to the wandering of people within a country or crossing borders. During this wandering migrants and local habitants communicate with each other and as a consequence of this interaction wanderers might be taken in by the locals (Tarrósy, 2016, 10). The integration into the new community is a complex process and its efficacy depends on circumstances and intentions. Literature identify different strategies of acculturation, that is to say the changes resulted by the encounter of the newcomers’ and the host’s culture. In Berry’s model (2011) the four strategies (assimilation, separation, integration, marginalization) are derived from the two basic issues: a relative preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity; and a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups. This is a mutual, reciprocal process where the choice of the non-dominant group is in interaction with the power of the dominant group on acculturation strategies (Berry, 2011, 2.5-2.6).

The globalisation and the last two centuries’ accelerated technical and economical development has also made its impact on the acculturation strategies. The new concept ‘transmigrant’ was entered in 1992 (by Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc, 1) to make a distinction also in terminology between the uprooted groups forced to leave language and culture behind, and the people whose “lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field’. Transmigrants enjoying the endless possibilities of fast travel and limitless communication in everyday life, think differently about integration into the host society, that raised concern amongst experts on their intentions and practices of integration (Mügge, 2016). As Portes (1999, 229) claims, whereas, ‘previously, economic success and social status depended exclusively on rapid acculturation and entrance into mainstream circles of the host society, at present they depend (at least for some) on cultivating strong social networks across national borders’. Transmigrant families in Hungary are represented mainly by highly skilled and well educated, well-to-do employees working for some years in the country. They are constantly aware of the fact that their sojourn is only a temporary status and they form their way of life accordingly. Mention must be made that empirical research show great differences on the transmigrant families’ lifestyle depending on the host country (ESRC, 2003). As Beaverstock (2005) revealed, British employees living in Singapore formed a rather closed expat community while British citizens living in New York were involved much more into the city’s everyday life. There are also examples of migrant populations due to their unsatisfaction of the way their
children are catered for in the receiving society creating and financing their own elite type school for Turkish origin children (Jacobs, 2013). The international research (Nguyen, Fülöp, Goodwin, Göbel, Martín Rojo, Grad and Berkics, 2009) exploring the social relationships and integration of Chinese migrant families found that compared to other countries (namely Germany, Spain and Great Britain) families living in Hungary showed significantly lower motivation for learning the country’s language and forming relationships with locals, but had the most active communication with China and Chinese people living in other countries. Expat families in Hungary rarely decide to learn Hungarian language and this trend highly influence also their choice on schooling. They seek monolingual English (or French, German), less often – rather in pre-primary education – bilingual schools for their children. The research exploring the schooling of children arriving to an international air base revealed, that transmigrant families after spending some years in the local bilingual school initiated launching an international school to have access to the education they found to be matching more their demand (Kovács, Czachesz, Kovács and Vámos, 2017).

Transmigrant families after spending some years in Hungary, move back to their country of origin or travel to new country of residence. In the meantime they wish their children to attend educational institutions that ensure relatively smooth transition into schools abroad. That means to pick a member of an international chain or one of which curriculum and administration system provides the required certificates and school reports. Even though there is a scientific debate on what criteria are to meet for the label of ‘international school’, in these days it is connected with the global mobility and its manifestation in differing contexts. They serve primarily the expatriate community, but show great variety in terms of size, student population and curriculum (Hayden and Thompson, 1995). In Hill’s (1994) definition, their students and staff are representatives of a number of cultural and ethnic origins, where the IB and/or a number of different national courses and examinations are offered and where the ethos is one of internationalism as distinct from nationalism. Such schools may serve a local and varied expatriate community of business people, diplomats, armed forces personnel and may attract resident students from all over the world (Hill, 1994, 7-8).

For the purpose of providing pre-primary education for the children aiming to move on to these international schools in Hungary, numerous market-driven ‘international’ kindergartens have appeared in the last 15 years. They claim to use English as the language of communication, to ensure the preparation for international schools and to guarantee multicultural ethos. English speaking kindergartens are also getting more and more popular amongst Hungarian upper middle class families for offering an early start of language learning. Some parents insist on monolingual English environments, others are more permissive in using Hungarian language, too. These settings are keen on providing native English speaker adults in the classes but in many cases they need to settle for
foreigners who don’t speak Hungarian. The idea behind employing foreigners is not only to ‘force’ children using English in the classrooms but to give a multicultural flavour to the whole atmosphere to attract expat parents. In Nieto’s (1994) model they claim to be on the third level out of the four of intercultural education – on the level of respect celebrating diversity also in the curriculum and in the policies.

People can feel at home in a multicultural environment if they own the competence called intercultural intelligence. If we identify intelligence as an ability to learn (Schmidt and Hunter, 2000, 4), than cultural intelligence is the ability to learn in the context of culture. With other words: ‘capability of an individual to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity’ (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008, 3.). This broader definition incorporates the fields that were discussed previously separately in the literature, e.g. social intelligence or emotional intelligence. Lately it is understood as a multidimensional concept that contains metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008, 4), so it includes both mental and behavioural capabilities. It refers simultaneously to the individual’s thinking, problem solving methods and behaviour containing also his knowledge of cultural diversity and the actual situation. He needs to be aware of the possibility of the need of changing his verbal behaviour, gestures or body language in a culturally diverse situation based on his knowledge of that particular culture involved in the interaction. However to operate these metacognitive and cognitive factors the motivational factor is also absolutely indispensable, to drive to make efforts for effective communication that realizes at last in the behavioural factor involving the nonverbal elements. It means that cultural intelligence is made up of three components: knowledge, mindfulness and skills and is located in the intersection point of them (Thomas and Inkson, 2009, 17).

The individual differences are categorized into three main groups in the literature: (1) cognitive and intellectual abilities, (2) personality traits and (3) cognition, emotion and conation (Boyle and Saklofske, 2004). The cultural intelligence belongs to the group of abilities and unlike the relatively stable personality traits it can be developed by training or experiences (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008, 8). Some personality traits are in close relation with the cultural intelligence, though, like the openness towards new experiences, since the interaction between cultures involves stepping into unusual situations. The scientific literature developed various models with different scales to measure cultural intelligence (e.g.: Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory: Kelley and Meyers, 1995; Global Awareness Profile Test: Corbitt, 1998; Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory: Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992; Sociocultural Adaptation Scale: Ward and Kennedy, 1999). Ang and Van Dyne’s Cultural Intelligence Scale (2007) that, aims to capture the multidimensional nature of intelligence, contains 50 items in its original form. In the research but its shorter (9 item) version was used, that had been developed specifically for self-report.
Research methods

The research was carried out in case study design for the purpose to explore the inner world of intercultural teacher communities – in depth and in their own context (Dick, 2014, 86). This intrinsic case study (Stake, 2003) aimed to explore the practices and beliefs of teachers working in private kindergartens that claim to use English as the main language of communication. All settings operate with a multicultural teacher community including foreigner educators. The mixed method research combined both quantitative and qualitative methods (Babbie, 1996) and realized the explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2012, 525) by following the same protocol in each of the six institutions. First, the teachers were asked to fill a questionnaire, which was followed by a data analyzing phase. Based on the results, both individual and group interviews were conducted to gain deeper understanding. Besides the issues of intercultural group dynamics and teachers’ beliefs of cultural competencies, the settings’ organizational culture was also explored – however the latter segment of the results is not discussed in full in this present paper. Nine kindergartens were contacted to be involved in the research and six out of them agreed on participating. Figure 2. shows the number of professionals involved in the research.

Figure 2.: Number of practitioners involved in the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The research sample</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prs filled the questionnaire out of 92 professional</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(with 25 participants altogether)</td>
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Results

The organizational culture

The results of the questionnaire showed very high scores on celebrating different cultures in the community (91% of the respondents) and the 95% of the respondents agreed on that colleagues coming from different countries are welcomed in the setting. The educational program and the websites of the schools highlight the positive approach to diversity and the emphasis on teaching the children tolerance and the acceptance of cultural differences. They stress the presence of prejudice-
free atmosphere in the institution and the ambition of developing the children’s positive attitude towards different cultures and languages.

According to the survey data, the majority of the educators (87%) feel that multiculturalism enhances the work in the school and 70% claims that educators from different cultures are encouraged by the leaders to contribute with their teaching ideas or methods. According to the data collected by the survey and the interviews, in five out of the six institutions the teacher community work collaboratively, where the distinction regarding the rights and opportunities of the employees is based on their position and it is regardless of their nationality. As a consequence of the fact that most foreigner educators do not have a teacher qualification that is accepted by the Hungarian regulation9, they work as teacher assistants, which allows less decisional authority and pedagogical freedom. The higher fluctuation of foreigner teachers also has an impact on their status within the community simply because in most cases Hungarian teachers are regarded as experienced, well-informed members of the schools and most foreigners are looked at more as novices. While four schools out of the six settings place emphasis on communicating in English with the staff on the meetings and via other communication channels (e.g. Facebook chat or e-mail groups), the other two settings expect colleagues to translate for each other. These differences originating from the attitude towards foreigners, show strong connections with the numbers of non-Hungarian families amongst the clients. The more foreigner children attend the school, the more mindful the staff is towards foreigners. Those schools that have been opened primarily to educate transmigrant children show true respect towards different cultures that can be marked in various elements of the organizational culture: they organize international days, parent nights, include related topics into the curriculum, use English at formal and informal meetings, provide opportunities for professional development also for non-Hungarians, provide extra support for parents. They celebrate Halloween, Harvest, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Carnival and other holidays. The attitude is established by the leaders and it is their responsibility to stand up for their employees in case of conflicts of/with the parents. In the interviews many examples were mentioned of cases that were solved by the leaders – sometimes mentioning unpleasant experiences from previous workplaces, where the leaders favoured the parents’ wishes over professionalism or intercultural values.

‘At my previous workplace there were parents at the beginning of the school year, who wanted to take away their child from my classroom because of my Muslim origin and the leaders fulfilled their request. Other parents followed them, and five kids were taken to another class just because I came

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from Iran. Here, at this place they asked the management to install finger print machine and security service around the school. They said, they are ready to spend money and install it here. But the management said: No, this is an international place with international teachers... you like it or not..."10

Even though it seems that the school’s whole atmosphere is filled with the respect for different cultures it still does not reach the fifth level of Banks’ (1993) system of multicultural education where the school’s whole organizational culture is penetrated by the celebration of different cultures. While the teachers are aware of the diversity in their class, their pedagogical methods reflect ‘colorblindedness’, they see only differences in the children’s personalities or abilities. Differentiation in their pedagogical methods is based on the parents’ requests and their observation on the children’s ‘individual differences’.

‘We don’t prepare them to Hungarian school – but they have a lesson once a week. It is more singing songs. It is compulsory for everyone. The parents never say that they don’t want their kid to attend it, but if they would, we would say: OK, it is not compulsory.’

‘I treated every child the same way here last year and I do so this year, too. This is the best way, to make it equally...’

The other two settings involved in the research, whose target group is mainly well-to-do Hungarian families, are operating more like a local private kindergarten. They offer early language learning provided by non-Hungarian educators but they lean more on teachers with Hungarian qualification who work according to the Hungarian curriculum intertwined with methods used for early language teaching like English songs, rhymes or games. At these settings foreigner educators simply add a flavour to the place and their integration and level of comfort depends on their partners working in the same or in the neighbouring classroom. In one of these two latter places during the interviews teachers mentioned examples of the leaders even practicing discrimination as opposed to their openness emphasized in their mission statement – being afraid of losing clients.

‘There was a girl here from Afghanistan two years ago and there was an issue regarding her head scarf. The leader asked her – at least that’s what we heard – that if it’s possible not to wear it in the kindergarten. So she did not wear it in the building, but when we went outdoor, than she put it on. There was also a girl wearing chador all the time. I think, kids would have had used to it, but parents did not react well. Now I don’t remember exactly if she decided to leave or was asked to, because there were other problems with her, too. And even different skin colour was not welcomed at the

10Texts signed with quote mark and italic letters are extracts from the interviews.
beginning. There was an attempt to employ an Indian lady with great experience with children, coming from another international institution. But she was not employed at the end – leaders were afraid of the black skin to generate bad feelings in parents. They did not even try to convince them, they did not give her a chance.’

All the six kindergartens have a policy of trying to meet parents’ needs as much as they can, and they look at parents’ unusual requests or complains as individual wishes that needs to be fulfilled in a high cost private kindergarten to keep clients satisfied. As a consequence of this approach, none of the institutions provide further trainings for their employees of topics related to intercultural competencies, knowledge or sensitivity. The majority (78%) of the respondents of the questionnaire claim that intercultural competencies can be easily learned from the colleagues.

Intercultural intelligence

The empirical research reinforced the picture traced by the literature, that in the communities of the international educational institutions intercultural competency is exceptionally valued, even though they have little knowledge of neither its actual meaning, nor of the possibilities of teachers’ and leaders’ professional development in relation with it (Gay, 2001, Swindler Boutte, Lopez-Robertson and Powers-Costello, 2011, Stier, Tryggvason, Sandström and Sandberg, 2012, Savva, 2013). The questionnaire included the short version of Ang and Van Dyne’s Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS). The items in harmony with Ang and Van Dyne’s concept of multidimensional cultural intelligence comprise motivational, metacognitive, cognitive, and behavioural elements. Figure 3. presents the items and the percentage of the respondents who claimed to agree or strongly agree with the content of the statement.

Figure 3. The items of the CQS and the percent of respondents who agree with the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The item</th>
<th>Percent of those who agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds. 76%

5. I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures. 72%

6. I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it. 63%

7. I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages. 62%

8. I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it. 57%

9. I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures. 44%

The educators almost unanimously stated that they enjoy the interaction with others arriving from different cultures – that one would consider as a precondition of working in an international institution. Altogether three educators ticked the ‘hard to decide’ answer of the 5-point Likert-scale, each of them belongs to a different school. The data-analysis revealed that the educators considered themselves performing better at the items incorporating motivational (1, 2) and metacognitive (4, 5) elements. That shows higher level of conscious cultural awareness during cross-cultural interactions and reflects better capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences. They claimed the lowest performance at the behavioural (6, 8) and cognitive (3, 7, 9) elements, that reflects weaker capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures and shows less knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultures (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008, 5-6).

Minor and greater differences could be seen at the data analysis when foreigner and Hungarian educators’ responses were analysed separately (Figure 4).

Figure 4.: 4 and 5-point answers of five items of the CQS in division of Hungarian and foreigner respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Foreigners’ answers</th>
<th>Hungarians’ answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The non-Hungarian educators considered their foreign language knowledge weaker than the Hungarians. This, considering the specificities of the settings, presumably refers to the Hungarians’ high level English knowledge that is the mother tongue for many foreigners. The other four item in Figure 4. indicate that the educators working abroad manage intercultural conflicts and interactions more consciously than the teachers in their home country do, even though they all work in the same environment. According to their self-report this consciousness manifests also in adjusting their verbal and non-verbal behaviour to the particular situation.

**Critical incidents**

The questionnaire did not reflect many conflicts within the teacher community; intercultural tensions were mentioned to appear rather during parent-teacher interactions. Conversely during the interviews many cases were brought up after discussing more explicitly the nature of intercultural conflicts.

The ‘biggest intercultural challenges’ of respondents mentioned in the survey could be categorised into four groups: tensions arising during interactions with (1) parents, (2) children, (3) colleagues, and caused by (4) cultural differences.

(1) With parents

Educators claimed that language barrier made their work most difficult in relation with teacher-parent interactions. They found it hard to report about the children or raise an issue when talking to parents with poor English. Besides language barriers teachers told about different ideas and beliefs about parenting – regarding gender roles, dressing, feeding the children or methods of disciplining the kids. Some teachers talked about conflicts as a consequence of the clash between the school’s style and the parents’ beliefs, and others even felt the need to ‘teach’ parents about the ‘right’ way of caring for children.

‘I try to educate parents about the weather and appropriate clothing in Hungary (especially parents from warmer countries)’
'I had to make some parents understand that their cultural attitude to their child is harmful for the child.'

Apart from appropriate dressing, the most critical point seemed to be when to start teaching academics. In Hungary the national curriculum framework for kindergartens (children aged 3 to 6) does not include teaching to read and write, but in many other countries (like UK or the USA), children start to learn academics at the age of four and five. So in these international institutions some parents have high demands and they expect their children to learn reading and writing at the age of four, while others accept if the school’s priorities are on other developmental areas.

'I could not make the 3 year old Indian boy's parents believe that it's OK if their son cannot read and write yet.'

'It's a cultural thing, also... When we had a meeting, we explained to the parents that this is not the most important thing for their child and they understood. That’s why we don’t have as many Japanese families as other schools. It is a cultural thing where the family’s values are...’

'There are some parents coming from a background from a culture where they put an emphasis on the academics. It is really stressful to the young kids. It’s sometimes hard to express to them, getting to realize the methodology here, but it’s not very hard to overcome. Well, it’s very typical. I wouldn’t say it’s cultural... it’s personal...’

Educators seem to avoid identifying cultural characteristics as if being afraid of generalization or stereotyping. Even if they mention national characteristics, they take back afterwards and emphasize individual needs and requests instead.

'Usually what we see at Japanese families, but of course not always... that they let more to their kids, they give them greater freedom. But I rather wouldn’t claim this because we have seen Japanese families who were exceptions from this, so it is hard to say that a culture is like that... Usually the French families also let more to their kids: they can crawl everywhere, doesn’t matter if they fall from the stairs, they’ll learn from it... But there are exceptions from this, too – not all French families are like that...’

(2) With children
Teachers need to face culture related challenges most often during the settling in period, when they don’t have a language in common with the children. These communicational barriers lessen with time, when children start to understand more English and get familiar with the daily routine. Educators also
mentioned the unusual type of behaviour of children and the lack of knowledge of their background, still they did not understand how intercultural training would make their work easier.

‘I’ve had to get used to Indian parenting styles and their children’s behaviours...’

‘I had to work with children where I didn’t know about their cultural background’

(3) With colleagues
Greater differences were visible between the Hungarian and the foreigner respondents regarding befriending within the school community. 76% of Hungarians did not feel that educators in the school form groups usually based on their nationalities, while only the 41% of foreigners agreed with them. Hungarians seemed to take for granted the integration into the community regarding it as a simple settling in process that everyone needs to go through ignoring the possible cultural differences that foreigners might need to bridge in everyday interactions.

‘We are very different as well, and the cultural backgrounds are very different of the teachers as well... Like in one culture you learn to put your head down and obey and do what the management says, and in an other culture you are raised to be more open and go for it, to be pushy and more extrovert... And we had a lot of new staff and some people have been here for longer some people haven’t been here for a year or half a year... They maybe don’t know how to approach people with their problems and they might get hurt more easily...’

Tensions between colleagues from different cultures very often spring up as a consequence of the different beliefs and training on education and pedagogical methods. The British system with its early start at teaching reading and writing at the age of four might seem strange for Hungarians who start learning literacy in the school at the age of 6-7.

‘I remember the beginning, when I came to this school, we had some Hungarian teachers who believed that certain methods are the one-and-only God-written law. It’s how we should do it! Even though as I said nothing is written in stone and we go with flow looking at children’s needs. Like the ‘Kodály method’... I love my nursery rhymes, they didn’t harm me. I started school as four, it didn’t harm me. But having teachers who would come head to head and we had training days saying that this is the way to do it, this is the way to look at children... And I thought to myself: I started school at

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11 The Kodály method is an approach to music education, that was developed during the mid-twentieth century by Zoltán Kodály in Hungary.
4 and I don’t think that there is anything wrong with me… But I remember coming across to these colleagues saying: No, the way you were educated is wrong. Now it is much more open…”

Lack of intercultural knowledge might result misunderstandings that is sensed by teachers but without understanding the underlying causes, they don’t have tools for handling the situations.

‘It is a difficulty of understanding what the other person means sometimes. It’s not a language thing. For example someone comes from the United States and they start talking and they feel that they are not understood here and we kind of feel that: What are you talking about? So we don’t get hurt, we just talk to each other but somehow the message doesn’t get through. And I’m still kind of figuring out why it is happening…”

During the interviews in their examples typically the personality clash and personal characteristics were emphasized rather than cultural differences as sometimes it is hard to distinguish them.

‘I guess the style of the teacher that matters. How they like to lead or teach the group. Somebody would like to have a more liberal atmosphere or style…. or just providing the environment and that the children learn by themselves. And there are people who like to give instructions and have a more structured way to teach. Last year me and my co-teacher had differences. I wanted to keep to the schedule… I like to be very punctual if there is something in the plan that this is how we gonna do – but she liked to go with the flow…”

(4) Cultural differences

Unlike from the above mentioned challenges some examples are not connected with interactions with other people. Gastronomy, weather, educational principles and other cultural specifics were brought up also when teachers were asked to think of their challenges of cultural nature.

‘We have many Indian families for whom using cutlery is a different thing. When I have Japanese children in the class I always talk to the parents that if they see children eating habits getting down it is because of not using chopstick here. When we had our end of the school year party the management said: Can you stop using cutleries and feed yourself with hand? To feel what is the challenge that Indian children go through when changing the habit?’

‘It is very hard for me now to deal with this ‘sleeping issue’. The leader and some colleagues don’t want the children to sleep, but we, Hungarians want them to, because we do think that kids need it. It is a cultural thing, too… Americans say: It is a waste of time, they should play instead. I see it differently. We are six in the department now: 3 Hungarians and 3 foreigners and we have two
sleeper groups and one non-sleeper but the leader insist on skipping it, too, regardless of what parents want. It is really a heartbreak for me.’

Conclusion

The data collected in six private multicultural kindergartens revealed that the leaders’ and educators’ attitude in most cases is welcoming towards different cultures. They are happy work in a multicultural community and they enjoy diversity. The motivational and metacognitive elements of cultural intelligence are well developed in most of the educators, but cognitive and behavioural elements seemed to lag behind them. The lack of knowledge of the consequences of cultural differences and the adequate methods dealing with them might lead to intercultural tensions and conflicts. These conflicts are not sensed as a result of intercultural interactions – they are considered more as personality clashes. Educators identify cultural challenges mainly with language barriers. During the interviews when the researchers could expose the nature of intercultural conflicts, the respondents mentioned various examples that had not been considered accordingly before. Since neither of the places provides trainings on intercultural topics, the success of managing everyday interactions depends on the quantity and the quality of related experiences of the leaders and the educators. These experiences and tacit knowledge are not turned into explicit knowledge due to the lack of expertise and the knowledge of this field in the school. Shaping the organizational culture and the final solution of incidents are mainly within the leaders’ competency, so ultimately their attitude and knowledge will be decisive in situations characterized by intercultural interactions.

Even though all respondents tried to avoid stereotyping, they were more confident to talk explicitly while mentioning good examples.

‘We have lots of Japanese children here. We know that it is a very different culture, but we don’t have any issues with them… especially not with them. They are so easy and flexible, polite, kind people, they respect teachers, they trust their ways. It’s a culture that I like very much and most of the teachers. And from those experiences from the children. Even if they didn’t like it before, they start to like it… These are the pleasures kind of every day. As far as I know, most of the teachers have very pleasant experiences. And also the management with the Japanese people in general.’

The data collected by quantitative and qualitative methods in six multicultural kindergartens showed positive attitude towards diversity but revealed the fact that educators and leaders are missing the intercultural knowledge that would be needed to behave effectively and adequately in situations characterized by cultural differences. It would be essential to provide trainings for the educators...
working in multicultural settings, to develop also the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of their cultural intelligence – to help to manifest intercultural education on the highest level of their organizational culture. This is especially significant in Hungary, where intercultural education and competencies are not mentioned in the *Act on Public Education* that provides the framework for local curriculums, and where intercultural education and intercultural competencies are not part of the everyday pedagogical discourse and practice.

**References**


Irina Sikorskaya and Natalya Nykyforenko. The inquiry for intercultural learning in higher education in Ukraine

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to explore the reasoning for social discourse on implementation of intercultural learning in higher education in Ukraine from a perspective of interdisciplinary and complex approach in the tertiary education. The study is guided by the questions of what are the official views on developments of intercultural learning, how it relates to internationalization efforts of higher education institutions in regards to upbring intercultural awareness and competences of young generation in a country in transition like Ukraine. The specifics of intercultural learning implementation in higher education in Ukraine have been analyzed. The study concludes that Ukrainian universities face enormous opportunities for intercultural learning development and adaption to the changing local environment and global challenges.

Keywords: higher education, internationalization, intercultural learning

Introduction

In order to understand the call for development of the intercultural learning in Ukraine we would like to start with presenting a short description of the multicultural and multiethnic mosaic of the country.

Ukraine has a population of nearly 43 million (2018 estimate). The CIA, Central intelligence agency World Factbook in 2019 gave a breakdown of ethnic groups as follows, based on a 2001 estimate: ‘Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%, Belarusian 0.6%, Moldovan 0.5%, Crimean Tatar 0.5%, Bulgarian 0.4%, Hungarian 0.3%, Romanian 0.3%, Polish 0.3%, Jewish 0.2%, other 1.8%. Among those 1.8%, the Roma is most vulnerable group dispersed around the territory of Ukraine.

The diversity of the cultural and historical traditions of the regions in Ukraine demonstrates certain hallmarks of multiculturalism and can be clearly traced to the realities of modern Ukrainian society.

The problems of intercultural interaction are also reflected in the linguistic diversity between the Ukrainians in the West and in the East of Ukraine. Currently, a majority of the population
speaks either Ukrainian or Russian but there are also those who speak Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Jewish, Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, Turkish and other languages. However, the minority languages are not currently recognized as regional languages, and Ukrainian remains the only official language.

The research conducted by the group of Ukrainian scholars on language policies in Ukraine within the project “Facilitating an Intercultural Dialogue about National Minorities. Learning the Ukrainian Language in Chernivtsi Region” has revealed a number of challenges for evidence-based educational policies concerning teaching Ukrainian as a non-native language to national minorities in Ukraine. On the one hand, they deal with political pressure on the part of neighbouring countries as national minorities urgently need to preserve their identity through their mother tongue which is under threat, as it seems to them (Zabolotna et al. 2019).

The language problem is therefore an important challenge for the Ukrainian state and one of the most significant issues in Ukraine’s internal politics.

The Constitution of Ukraine (1991) requires that “the State promotes and supports the development and consolidation of the Ukrainian nation, of its historical consciousness, traditions and culture, as well as development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all indigenous peoples and national minorities”.

The two fundamental governmental documents: the “Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine”(1991) and the “Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine”(1992) establish the basic principles of the ethnic-national policy, which in its turn is being built on the doctrine of respect and equality of citizens of Ukraine of different ethnicities and thus is forbidding the discrimination on ethnic grounds (Country Policy and Information Note Ukraine: Minority groups, 2019).

In spite of the recognition of ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity in Ukraine, the sociological surveys show that there are certain tendencies in the society towards isolationism and even xenophobia, caused by the specificity of historical development, immobility of the population, instability of democratic practices, degraded by the current military conflict. Nowadays the question is if the Ukrainian society is ready to consider its cultural and linguistic diversity as richness, not as a threat to the integrity of the nation. To answer this question is not easy, as the titular nation is not sufficiently consolidated, it is bilingual, regionally divided, and the political elites are mixt with the ideas on the Ukraine’s national interests” (Kolodiy 2016).

**Intercultural learning in higher education: reality, challenges and perspectives**
The current situation in the Ukrainian society has amplified significantly the cultural diversity and has called for definite political measures towards reducing social tension and increasing social cohesion. There is a need for an alternative educational strategy which would serve as a means of social and personal transformation and would allow creation of a democratic and free society. This aim generates powerful socio-cultural and educational challenges and encourages the academia to search the ways of modernizing education in transitional society to which Ukraine belongs (Gorbunova 2012). In this regards the well-elaborated intercultural education policy can have an overall positive effect, and by this can contribute to the strengthening of social inclusion.

The changing academic environment of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ukraine from the old mono-culture environment towards a multicultural and diversity-oriented requires new approaches of interaction between academic staff and students, both domestic and international. It is obvious that the general, often fragmented intercultural trainings of universities’ students in Ukraine do not meet the challenges of real life such as enormous socio-political alteration, influence of globalization and the European integration aspirations of Ukraine. Obviously local and global challenges explicitly show the need of educating young generation to be equipped with intercultural knowledge and competences, capable for dialogue between representatives of different social and cultural groups for eliminating societal tensions.

It was already well articulated by the distinguished international scholarship (Banks 1999; Hill2007; Faas 2011; Palaiologou 2018) that multi/intercultural education represents a complicated process which includes academic environment, curricula content, special qualification of the educators who teach in the multicultural classroom, implementation of the mechanisms and tools for intercultural competence development of teaching staff and students. The purpose of this research is to study and analyze the situation with intercultural education in higher education (HE) in Ukraine which has been undergoing major reform. In our research we choose to employ the concept of the intercultural learning, defined by Lane (2012) as acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the ability of learners to both understand culture and interact with people from cultures different from their own.

Intercultural learning (IL) as a concept was developed in Europe in the 1990s, supported by a wide range of the official documents which demonstrate the evidence of increasing importance of intercultural dimension of education within the EU. Intercultural education as a subject of education policies in Europe has been undergoing significant change lately. Most scholars and
policy-makers regard intercultural education as the key to citizenship and democracy, and individual countries and international institutions tend to base their policies on this assumption (Sikorskaya 2017).

In Ukraine IL is a relatively new approach in the education system, however dynamically developed. The first official mentioning related to IL was found in the “Concept of civic education of the person under condition of Ukrainian statehood development” (2000). The document defined teaching of the diversity of cultures, fostering respect and dignity among the representatives of all cultures, regardless of racial or ethnic origin, perception of interrelation and mutual influence of the universal and national components of culture in a broad sense. The document stressed upon the need of the formation of cultural pluralism, universal values, and tolerant attitude towards other cultures.

The latest trends of modernization of national education policy were launched in 2014, and marked with major social transformation influenced by the Revolution of Dignity underlying the significant social role of education.

In the fundamental legislative document Law on Education (2017) there is a declaration of the importance of the acquisition of competences, knowledge, attitudes based on cultural diversity tolerance, and intercultural dialogue however, multiculturalism was not mentioned among the basic principles of education. The newly adopted Law on Higher Education (2014) asserts that HEIs have traditionally maintained a central role in promoting intercultural understanding, increasing solidarity, and international relations. The both documents state that the content of HE should be changed in the area of the developing the key competences including intercultural as the main learning outcomes.

In general, the recently updated Ukrainian legislation and education policies increasingly include the references on the internationalization of education process in HEIs.

There are currently two main approaches to (IL) in the Ukrainian HE system: 1) development of intercultural dimension of HE under internationalization; 2) addressing the increased discourse about cultural diversity and multiculturalism in Ukraine and its reflection in education.

The present study emphasize that the Ukrainian HEIs currently experience a shift from local to global in an attempt to catch up with modern trends, and to establish truly internationalized and intercultural learning setting.

The Ukrainian HE system has been greatly sustained by internationalization which today contributes significantly to the overall modernization of education process. Under the influence of globalization, Ukrainian universities seek to attract a larger number of foreign students in a
fierce competition while addressing the issue of achieving a high level of intercultural understanding, striving to increase the intensity of interaction between representatives of different cultures, contributing to raising the level of education of foreign students (Savenkova and Svyrydenko 2012). Also, during the recent years there appeared the new opportunities for Ukrainin scholars in regards to their international activities, associated with significant intensification of international cooperation in science and education.

Speaking about the academic offer in IL, it should be pointed out, that quite a number of pedagogic institutes provide “Multi/Intercultural Education” as separate study courses. Currently the Intercultural Studies have been located in newly established special study programs and specialized areas of knowledge like Cultural Studies, Regional Studies, Education Studies, Philosophy, Social and Political Sciences, Social Anthropology. Many study courses on intercultural competencies are offered for those who major in International Business. The syllabi that touch upon the multicultural issues define the learning goals, such as: (1) to provide students with self-awareness of their own culture as well as an understanding of other cultures; (2) to expand students' ability to think critically and with an open mind about the controversial contemporary issues; and (3) to provide students with the intellectual awareness about the culturally diverse society.

The IL is traditionally incorporated in the languages curricula. The role of the “Foreign language” in IL cannot be underestimated. Mastering of foreign language provides functional dialogic interaction of different cultural world outlooks and traditions. Besides, foreign language classes create academic microclimate in which linguistic knowledge and skills of a student are fundamentally combined with intercultural basis (Vovchasta 2015).

As it was emphasized earlier, the HEIs in the country have acquired the features of multicultural environment through the mechanisms of internationalization of HE. One of the main measures to support internationalization and multiculturalism is to arrange and promote international mobility of students, research scholars and teaching staff.

The international mobility has been the well-known activity for Ukrainian academia since early times. The ancient lists of those who studied at the Universities of Bologna (Italy) and Jagiellonian University (Poland) indicate a significant number of students from Ukraine. Since the time when the University of Krakow was founded and until the mid-sixteenth century about 2000 Ukrainian students studied there. According to some reports, about 800 students from Ukraine studied at Jagiellonian University during this period. Many of them later became influential figures in the cultural life of both Ukraine and Poland. Kharkiv Imperial University
in Ukraine, founded in 1804, was famous for hosting the vast majority of professors from Germany, France, Poland and other countries (Bakirov et al. 2016).

Nowadays, according to the *Bologna National Report on Ukraine (2018)* there is a good dynamic of academic mobility in Ukraine. The EU Programme Erasmus+ shows that during 2014-18 around 7,259 Ukrainians achieved mobility opportunities due to receiving grants. Full details are available on their website [http://erasmusplus.org.ua/](http://erasmusplus.org.ua/).

The positive shift in gaining intercultural understanding and awareness by the participants of the mobility programs is shown through their appreciation of:

- the international dimensions of their studies;
- exhibiting respect for other cultures;
- learning the language of the host country
- learning about the world through interaction with international faculty and students;
- improving their personal and professional skills and competences;
- projecting wider career opportunities.

Obviously, the outgoing students and faculty can improve their professional and personal skills including intercultural competencies through the experience abroad. Although growing in numbers, these measures bear a limiting feature, since it still involves a comparatively small number of faculty members and students. Thus, in order to overcome these limitations, there are many other actions that HEIs have to carry out address the external challenges of modern globalized world. Most of the Ukrainian HEIs practice Internationalization at home (IatH), which was defined by Nilsson (1999) as domestically oriented practices of the international activities. They strive to enroll more international students and engage the international professorship to the education process, as well as to integrate an international and multicultural dimension in the curricula for all students. The use of foreign language in the learning process is often viewed as an indicator of internationalization. The English-taught programs and courses incorporated into curriculum have been developed in the majority of the Ukrainian HEIs. Such internationalized programs serve not only to gain new students from abroad, but also enhance the offer aimed at local students, dissuading them from considering an education elsewhere. The main challenge here is the appropriate provision of tertiary education in the medium of English, which requires changes in the organization of the academic process, conversion of administrative systems and the recruitment of external staff, when local teachers cannot deliver appropriate levels of English-lingual instruction (Duszynski 2011).
In Ukraine, the dynamic internationalization of HE also provides a significant additional impetus for study of the multicultural component of universities’ functioning, education and research. Major universities elaborated strategy of internationalization, they strive to create a multicultural academic environment, introduce international components into curricula, enroll international students, engage foreign lecturers into study process, initiate international research projects, and arrange international student mobility. In spite of performing these activities, still the question on the agenda is open, whether internationalization of HEIs in Ukraine can help meet the contemporary challenges like gaining intercultural awareness, global citizenship, and cosmopolitan responsiveness by the academia and students.

Speaking about the theoretical elaborations, it should be pointed out, that from the end of 1990s, in the sociological studies about the multiculturalism issues in the post-Soviet space the theme of inter-ethnic relations has continued to dominate. These studies incorporate: conducting cross-cultural analysis of value orientations; assessing the level of interethnic tolerance; finding out the national distance index; identifying peculiarities of integration processes, adaptation of immigrants in the multi-ethnic environment, nature of ethnic conflicts; developing recommendations for the prevention of interethnic misunderstandings; studying behavior patterns of the subjects of interethnic relations. A number of Ukrainian scholars (Bekh, 2013, Budnyk 2013, Debych 2018, Donez 2002, Gorbunova 2011, Gurenko 2011, Kolodyi 2008) research and analyze the prerequisites of introduction of IL in Ukraine, consideration of theoretical and methodological foundations of forming intercultural competence of young generation, development of intercultural dimension of internationalization of HE and elaboration of the special training of the educators capable to act as the advocates of intercultural teaching and learning.

Since 1998 intercultural education, teaching and learning has been on the agenda of numerous conferences, seminars, round tables, usually organized by the departments of Social and Political Sciences. During these events scholars and practitioners could discuss the models of IL applicable for Ukrainian higher education system, grounded on the comparative analysis of international experience and local practices while applying didactic, experimental, cultural, national, emotional, behavioral approaches towards IL.

It’s also should be noted that, Ukraine-based funds and programs like USAID and International Renaissance Foundation provide financial support to educational and non-governmental organizations with their projects tackling the issues of cultural diversity, social cohesion and development of intercultural active citizenship education. As an example, the Soros Foundation...
Renaissance funded the research in 2001 on multicultural education within the secondary school curricula in Ukraine.

The EU Programme Erasmus+ actively supports the projects aimed at enhancing internationalization efforts, development of intercultural competences and skills of students and teaching staff.

Through 2011-2014 the authors of this study participated actively in the EU Programme Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project: “Multicultural Europe: cultural diversity and social cohesion” implemented at Donetsk State University of Management. The benefit of such projects is enormous. Within the frame of such projects we can create the multicultural environment even in mono-cultural classroom. We make our classes illustrious by engaging visiting foreign lecturers, international students, and the representatives of international delegations, missions, consulates and industry located in the city. In the formats of public lectures, round tables and debates, we open the floor for discussion of the hot topic of the cultural diversity and how to become tolerant and live together peacefully. These activities motivate students to:

- reflect on their own cultures and their impact on intercultural interactions
- analyze cultural patterns both domestically and internationally
- comprehend strategies for adaptation to cultural differences
- solve complex problems in intercultural settings
- form new understanding of social problems, and to promote a wide circulation of values of tolerance and social cohesion.

What else helps us in our work? There are lots of positive examples and inspiring practices shared by the international scholars working in this field. Many practices including various projects on IL are in the open access in the Internet databases. Invaluable experience is gained through participating in the thematic conferences, workshops, networking.

Lately it has been noted that IL practices received complementary impulse thanks to cooperation of the HEIs with non-governmental, professional and public organizations. There is growing number of such models of cooperation between academia and civil society working in their joint efforts to diversify the curricular and extra-curricular activities of the learners in order to enrich classroom experiences.

Currently, in Ukraine there are more than 1200 of NOGs dealing with the national minorities, more than 30 centers of national cultures, hundreds of civic organizations dealing with questions of social cohesion mediation conflict resolution tolerance and recognition of cultural diversity like: “Association of citizens of Belarus in Ukraine”, “Association of Bulgarians of Ukraine”, “All-Ukrainian Moldovan Association”; “League of Tolerance” to name a few.
In most cases these organizations provide informal education in regards to:

- extension and deepening the awareness of the problematic connected to multiculturalism in Ukraine
- initiating and arranging trainings on developing intercultural competence
- reporting, visualizing and sharing their activities and best practices to a wider public.

In cooperation with the HEIs these organizations create the genuinely authentic experience of a multicultural environment for young people.

Thanks to all these opportunities, higher education area in Ukraine can be considered as a precious mediating public space where, unlike most of the society, different groups encounter and study side by side.

However, many challenges remain. From our point of view, the necessary steps to be undertaken could be the following: first of all, it is important to implement a set of comprehensive and coordinated education policies towards the state commitment to develop and maintain the concepts of cultural pluralism and democracy, including the care about different customs, traditions, beliefs and values of all minority groups inhabited Ukraine. These policies should cover the following points:

- raising awareness of the relevance of IL among educators, students and wider public
- maintaining the presence of the intercultural component in education and training
- introducing into the procedure of pedagogical activity the criteria reflecting the ethno-cultural diversity
- highlighting intercultural aspects in the functioning of all components of the structure of any educational institution
- engaging in the governance of HEIs the representatives of ethnic minorities and various subcultural groups
- combating racism, discrimination, nurturing respect for the ideas of cultural pluralism, developing intercultural competence
- reconstructing the curricula to be more responsive to the challenges of modern globalized world, teaching intercultural communication skills.

Policy-makers and academia should draw more attention on the following:

- development of the IL at HEIs must go along with the adult education
- informal and non-formal education should be developed in the same way so that intercultural understanding and community harmony is promoted through a range of curricular and extracurricular activities
• the efforts on internationalization of HEIs should include the tools for implementing IL
• it is critical to make sure that educators have access to professional development programs
• IL should be problematized wider through conferences, seminars, workshops and publications (scientific journals and media)
• IL should spread its ideas beyond the school and engage more actively politicians, government officials, employers as well as representatives of NGOs
• more positive examples and best practices should be disseminated.

Hence, even through a brief analysis of development of IL in HE in Ukraine, it can be noted that HEIs have to tackle all the complexity of issues and tasks associated with development and sustaining the intercultural teaching and learning, and formation of students’ competences and skills for living and working in a multicultural environment.

**Conclusion**

In response to social and political transformation the Ukrainian education system has been going through the transformation which is reflected in changes in national education policies and newly adopted laws and regulations.

Reforming education has been an ongoing process since Ukraine gained independence in 1991. This transformative process in education is not easy one, it should involve political will, favorable external environment and readiness of academia to change. Currently the education faces the need to react not only to significant socio-economic transformation in the Ukrainian society but also to global challenges. The Ukrainian government should introduce the advanced education policies stimulating the HEIs to put into force educational programs, which will accumulate the intercultural awareness, openness and tolerance towards others among students. As it was mentioned earlier, last years the Ukrainian society has been experiencing tough challenges with respect to multicultural phenomena under condition of surviving big transformations in political, economic and social spheres. These transformations are revolutionary and not peaceful. They reveal the gaps and shortcomings in almost all the spheres of human lives in Ukraine. As it turns out Ukraine is in need for the process of national consolidation, as well as for deep reconsidering of values and attitudes of the culturally diverse society at large. On the other hand, there is a strong belief that these dramatic developments
provide new avenues of the renewal process due to the changed public approach to societal issues and challenges on the path of nation advancement. This new emerging state of society has forced to introduce the principles of intercultural dialogue in order to form a new understanding of social problems, and to promote a wide circulation of values of tolerance and multiculturalism. We strongly believe, that IE can be a useful tool in performing this mission and can contribute greatly to creation of a more peaceful, equitable, and just society.

The advanced study courses on IL should be introduced in Ukrainian education system at all levels as they will stimulate the critical thinking of students. The national specificity of the implementation and development of the IL should follow the trend of deconstruction and de-stereotyping the social grand-narratives about nation, class, gender, religion with the aim of formation of a new personality who will adequately adjust in the concept of democratic society. Political instability is the main threat to the modernization of HE in Ukraine as it is hard to predict how the situation in all sectors of social life including education is going to develop. At the same time, those dramatic events started in 2014 with the Revolution of Dignity led to a huge transformation in people’s minds about national identity, and the place of Ukraine in the global community (Kvit 2015).

Development and advancement of IL in Ukrainian higher education system should be built with a view to the multinational composition of the country, pursuing the goal of harmonization of national and ethno-cultural relations, preserving the ethnic identity of peoples, humanistic traditions of their cultures. Thus, what can be desirable, is nurturing multi/intercultural vector within education as it represents the most appropriate response to the challenges of globalization and complexity. Strong belief as well as strong commitment of all the academia towards HE mission needed in regards to creating academic environment favorable to educate globally competent students with the developed intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Summarizing the present research, it should be pointed out, that studying the experience on implementation and development of IL in the countries in transition like Ukraine can contribute to the research of intercultural perspectives of HE education in a world-wide scale, indicating the factors that can stimulate this process, promote dissemination of positive experience, identify barriers in this area, and show the ways to overcome them, taking into account international experience and specificity of each country.

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Irina Sikorskaya and Natalya Nykyforenko
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Domiziana Turcatti and Kiara Assaraf. Lessons Gained from a Case Study of a Latin American NGO in London: The Role Intercultural Competence Plays in the Delivery of Services to Migrant Communities

Abstract

This paper explores the role that intercultural competence plays in the delivery of services of migrant-led organisations to migrant communities. Intercultural competence refers to one’s ability to effectively use a set of knowledge, skills and individual traits when working with culturally diverse people. It specifically examines the role of intercultural competence in a London-based Latin American non-profit organisation that supports Latin American migrants with welfare advice, workshops and sociocultural events. This study relies on ethnographic fieldwork conducted within the NGO by Turcatti from October 2018 to July 2019 and on survey analysis carried out by Assaraf while coordinating one of the NGO’s projects from January 2018 to July 2019. The findings indicated that NGO’s staff demonstrated and valued four intercultural competence traits: (1) knowledge of their clients and (2) of the British welfare and legal system, (3) the capacity to communicate effectively with clients and third parties on behalf of clients; and (4) openness to clients’ involvement in the NGO and new ideas. Such intercultural competence traits allowed the NGO to promote their clients’ integration in their own community and in British society by enhancing Latin Americans’ access to welfare and information, critical awareness of their rights, social networks, and new everyday knowledge that improves not only the NGO, but more importantly their community. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of intercultural competence in migrant-led organisations for the successful delivery of services to migrant communities and towards the promotion for their integration.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, Migrant Organisations, Latin Americans in London, Integration
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Introduction

Migrant-led organisations are recognised as playing a central role in promoting migrants’ integration, broadly defined as the process through which migrants become accepted in a given society (Pennix & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). Scholars indicate that higher degrees of institutional support are fundamental for the functioning of migrant-led organisations (Basel & Emejulu, 2017; Papadopoulos, Chalkias & Fratsea, 2013; Cebolla Boado & López Sala, 2012). However, little is known about the qualities that make these organisations successful in supporting migrants’ integration. In this context, success is defined as the ability of these organisations to improve migrants’ lives through the services delivered.

Defined as ‘an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national, cultural backgrounds’ (Johnson, Lenartowicz & Apud, 2006, p. 530), intercultural competence was found to play a crucial role in the delivery of healthcare and education to culturally diverse populations (e.g. Jongen, McCalman & Bainbridge, 2018; Noorani, Baïdak, Krémó & Riiheläinen, 2019). To shed light on the qualities that make migrant-led organisations successful in supporting migrants through the integration process, this paper explores the role that intercultural competence plays in the delivery of services of migrant-led organisations to migrant communities. Specifically, it presents the case study of a London-based Latin American non-profit organisation (NGO) whose aim is to support Latin American migrants through welfare and general advice, workshops and sociocultural events.

This paper sets out to (1) identify the kind of intercultural competence demonstrated and valued by this NGO’s staff as fundamental to successfully deliver their services and (2) understand the role that such intercultural competence plays in the NGO’s ability to support...

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12 Latin American migrants are people from South America, Mexico, Central America and the islands of the Caribbean whose inhabitants speak a Romance language (e.g. Spanish and Portuguese) (McIlwaine et al., 2011).
migrants’ integration. The focus is on the NGO’s staff as they are the ones who advise clients on welfare- and job-related issues and organise workshops which aim to respond to clients’ interests and needs. This research relies on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted by Domiziana Turcatti within this NGO between October 2018 and July 2019 and quantitative and qualitative investigation carried out by Kiara Assaraf who worked as the health promotion project coordinator of the NGO from January 2018 to July 2019.

Having introduced the study’s focus and rationale, this paper presents the methodology on which this research is based and an overview of the research context. It then reviews previous studies on the role of intercultural competence in the delivery of services to culturally diverse population and highlights how investigating the role of intercultural competence may foster the understanding of the qualities that make migrant-led organisations successful in supporting migrants through the integration process. After presenting the findings, this paper concludes by highlighting the importance of intercultural competence in migrant-led organisations for the successful promotion of migrants’ integration.

**Methodology**

This research took place in a London-based NGO run by Latin American and British staff whose goal is to promote the integration of London’s Latin American migrants mostly through one-to-one welfare, general, and job-related advice, workshops and sociocultural events. In this NGO, the staff that deliver services to migrants are called advisors, while the recipients of these services are called clients. Volunteers is the term deployed to refer to unpaid staff.

In this NGO, Turcatti conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Spanish and English between October 2018 and July 2019 as part of her MPhil research on the type of support available to London’s Latin American migrants. The ethnographic data collected included (1) the shadowing of 68 advisor-client one-to-one sessions; (2) unstructured interviews with staff members about the services they deliver, the type of clients they have, the challenges and strategies for delivering (3) informal conversations and 17 semi-structured 45-minute interviews with clients and volunteers about their everyday life and the support available to them; and (4) participant observation in 5 workshops delivered by the NGO, 7 social events, and 2 staff meetings.
Assaraf coordinated the health promotion project of this NGO from January 2018 to July 2019. Her role involved (1) organising educational health-related workshops; (2) researching the health needs of the NGO’s clients and (3) evaluating the services/activities offered by her project using quantitative and qualitative methods. She conducted two surveys. The first survey took place in August 2018, investigated the experiences of the NGO’s clients in accessing healthcare services, and received 64 responses. Conducted between May 2018 and June 2019, the second survey evaluated the services provided by the health promotion project and received a total of 200 responses. This data was complemented with (4) qualitative data collected during reflective sessions on weekly basis with staff, volunteers and clients, which were used to evaluate the NGO’s services and explore their effectiveness and impact in clients’ lives.

To identify the kind of intercultural competence demonstrated and valued by this NGO’s staff as fundamental to successfully deliver their services, we used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2000). We identified in the fieldnotes and interview transcripts the kinds of knowledge, skills and personal attributes that reflected the intercultural competence of the NGO’s staff and which were identified by the staff as fundamental to deliver their services. To understand the role that such intercultural competence plays in the NGO’s ability to deliver services we relied on advisors’ self-reports provided during the interviews and reflective sessions as well as on clients’ own perspectives. This means that in coding clients’ interview transcripts, we searched for positive and negative evaluations of their relationships with advisors and of the impact of their services in their lives.

The fact that Turcatti conducted ethnographic fieldwork and Assaraf was employed in the NGO allowed both researchers to observe the impact of the services delivered by the NGO’s staff in the short- and medium-term and identify how the NGO support migrants through the integration process. Indeed, ethnography allowed us to rely not only on what advisors and clients said about the impact of the services on clients’ lives, but also on observations. These were transcribed and thematically coded with the objective to identify services’ outcomes that were not mentioned or taken for granted by advisors and clients during interviews.

This study benefitted from combining our perspectives. Though Turcatti had not previously worked with London’s Latin American community, her position as an ‘outsider’ helped make evident issues that may have otherwise remained taken for granted. By being an
‘insider’, Assaraf had a deeper knowledge of how the organisation worked. Having presented the methodology on which this study relies, we describe the larger research context.

Research Context: Latin American Migrants in London

Latin American migrants in London face multiple barriers to integration. First, they have been struggling to enter and remain in the UK (McIlwaine et al., 2011). Furthermore, a considerable size of London’s Latin American community face exploitation and downward mobility in the labour market as Latin American migrants are overwhelmingly concentrated in low-paid jobs for which they are overqualified (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016:2018). Scholars attribute such downward mobility to limited English language skills but also to employers’ reluctance to recognise their educational titles (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016:2018). Exploitation, downward mobility, coupled with limited English language skills become barriers to integration as they make it harder to access socio-economic opportunities, adequate housing, education, healthcare, information and improve English and knowledge of their rights.

Despite the obstacles to integration Latin American migrants face in London and the large size of this population, integration policies and institutional support targeted at Latin Americans seem to be absent (Pardo, 2018). McIlwaine and Bulge (2016) estimated that in 2013 there were 245378 Latin American migrants in the UK, sixty percent of whom was residing in London. However, Latin Americans are not institutional recognised (Pardo, 2018). They are not represented in the British Ethnic Recognition Scheme, the scheme used by the government to collect information about the different ethnic groups in the UK (McIlwaine et al., 2011). The lack of institutional recognition prevents the collection of information about this group and the development of integration policies that may benefit Latin American migrants (Pardo, 2018).

In light of this context, scholars emphasise the importance of Latin American migrant-led organisations in supporting Latin American migrants to access information, social protection (e.g. welfare benefits), and their rights (Mas Giralt & Granada, 2015; Pardo, 2018). However, little is known about the everyday practices that make these organisations successful in promoting Latin American migrants through the integration process. Given that London’s local authorities play a central role in the development of integration policies (Pardo, 2018), examining the ways in which Latin American NGOs support London’s Latin American migrants may instruct local authorities on the skills needed to support this
community. In this study, we investigate the role that intercultural competence plays in one of these organisations.

**Literature Review**

*Intercultural Competence*

While little is known about intercultural competence in the context of migrant-led organisations, some scholars have found intercultural competence to play a crucial role in the delivery of services to culturally diverse populations in the medical domain (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2016; Jongen et al., 2018). Thom and Tirado (2006), for example, showed that a mature level of intercultural competence in medical staff (e.g. their ability to mediate with the healthcare system on behalf of migrant patients) is associated with an increase in migrant patients’ satisfaction and trust in the healthcare services in the US.

The importance of intercultural competence has also been shown in the educational context (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Noorani et al., 2019). In England, Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) found that migrant students were successfully integrated in the classroom when teachers displayed positive attitudes towards intercultural interactions, were knowledgeable about students’ cultures and needs and able to adapt the communication style according to the students’ culture. In contrast, a lack of intercultural competence in teachers harms migrant students’ educational success (Magos & Simopoulos, 2009). Such teachers often do not recognise the marginalisation of the minority group of students (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Students in turn develop a lack of trust in the educational system and the dominant culture, therefore face great difficulties in the classroom (Bartolomé, 2003; McKenna, 2003).

This research builds upon this literature by investigating the role of intercultural competence in a new domain, that of migrant-led organisations, and by examining the role of intercultural competence in allowing migrant-led organisations to promote migrants’ integration. As shown in the next two sections, while scholars have demonstrated the importance of migrant-led organisations in supporting migrants through the integration process, little is known about what make these organisations successful.

*Migrant-Led Organisations as Crucial Agents in Shaping Migrants’ Integration*

Pennix and Garcés-Mascareñas’s (2016) emphasise the complex nature of integration.
They identify three crucial dimensions of migrants’ integration: (1) the *legal/political* dimension (e.g. the extent to which migrants are granted the rights to be part of the political community), (2) the *socio-economic* dimension (e.g. the extent to which migrants have access to socio-economic opportunities, housing, education, healthcare etc…) and (3) the *cultural* one (e.g. the degree to which migrants and the receiving society ‘acculturate’—in other words, understand, endorse and respect each other’s cultures).

Scholars agree on the importance of migrant-led organisations in promoting migrants’ socio-cultural and socio-economic integration. Studies on migrant-led organisations in Italy and Greece show how these associations offer spaces to fulfil migrants’ cultural, social and religious needs while also enabling the exchange of information and the opportunity to socialise (Caselli & Grandi, 2011; Papadopoulos et al., 2013). Studies conducted in Spain and in the UK show how migrant-led organisations are also crucial in supporting migrants to access social services such as health care, welfare benefits, and advice on legal and welfare related issues (Cebolla Boado & López Sala, 2012; Mas Giralt & Granada, 2015).

Furthermore, migrant-led organisations have been identified as crucial in promoting migrants’ political integration. In Stockholm, Myrberg (2011) found that migrant-led associations may become training grounds for acquiring and practicing civic and political skills, increasing migrants’ political engagement. In addition, migrant-led organisations may also be involved in campaigns advocating for migrants’ rights. Studies conducted in Spain showed that migrant-led organisations were central agents in the fight for the introduction of integration policies (Cebolla Boado & López Sala, 2012). The question to be addressed is what qualities make migrant-led organisations successful in supporting migrants’ integration.

**What Makes Migrant-Led Organisations Successful?**

Scholars have mostly discussed the structural conditions that may enhance or limit the ability of migrant-led associations to promote migrants’ integration. The literature indicates that migrant-led organisations thrive when governments promote migrants’ associationism (Papadopoulos et al., 2013; Cebolla Boado & López Sala, 2012). In Spain, scholars found that migrant-led organisations were more numerous and suffered from lower levels of “mortality rate” in regions where local authorities made state funds available to migrant-led association and involved them in their decision-making (Martín Pérez, 2004; González Ferrer & Morales Diez, 2006).
Other scholars address how economic crises and austerity measures may negatively affect the ability of migrant-led organisations to fulfil their goals. Cebolla Boado and Lopez Sala (2012) documented how the austerity measures implemented by the Spanish government after the 2008 economic crisis reduced the state funding available to NGOs supporting migrants. This led to the death of migrants’ organisations who relied on these funds. In the UK and French context, Bassel and Emejulu (2017) showed how the scarcity of funds following the 2008 crisis and the introduction of austerity measures increased competition between migrant-led organisations, threatening the solidarity between these organisations and their collective political power.

While the studies reviewed above help us understand the structural conditions that may enhance or limit the impact of migrant-led associations, little is known about the qualities and practices that make these organisations successful in delivering their services and supporting migrants’ integration. To shed light on these qualities, we focus on the role that intercultural competence plays in the delivery of services of the NGO where we conducted ethnographic fieldwork and survey analysis.

Findings

The Intercultural Competence of the NGO’s Staff

This research revealed that the NGO’s staff demonstrated and highlighted the importance of four intercultural competence traits: (1) knowledge of the diversity of profiles, needs, and communication styles of their Latin American clients, (2) a critical understanding of the British welfare and legal system, (3) the capacity to communicate effectively with clients and third parties on behalf of clients and (4) an openness to client-led projects and involvement within the NGO.

Knowledge of Clients. Advisors exhibited and valued having knowledge of their Latin American clients. Firstly, both Latin Americans and British advisors speak Spanish, their clients’ mother tongue. Indeed, most of their clients are from Spanish-speaking South American countries. The NGO’s advisors stressed the importance of being fluent in clients’ native language. Clients are more likely to reach out for help when there is no language barrier.

Most importantly, advisors valued and had knowledge of their clients’ profiles. The typical client of the NGO works in low-paid jobs (e.g. cleaning, construction sector), struggles to make ends meet and to find adequate accommodation. Some cannot work due to health
conditions. Given that the NGO does not provide immigration advice, clients are all documented (e.g. they hold residence permits or European citizenships).

Being aware of their clients’ profiles allows advisors to ask the ‘right questions’ during appointments, meaning specific questions to understand clients’ situations which are necessary to provide advice. An advisor provided an example:

‘It is common among our clients to not talk about the difficulties they face in their accommodations […] They don’t know they can receive help for these issues […] We have to ask them directly: can you go up the stairs without a problem? Does the water, gas and heater work well?’

According to the NGO’s advisors, asking the right questions becomes important when clients are not aware that they can receive support for some of the issues they face in the everyday life and therefore do not report these to advisors during appointments.

For the NGO’s advisors, knowing their clients also meant being culturally aware of their clients’ values. An advisor recollected an example of this with the case of Isabela, a 45-year-old Colombian client:

‘Her son used to beat her. She had already approached other charities for support and was offered to either report him to the police or leave the family home […] She felt misunderstood because she wanted the support, but still wanted to remain close to her son […] Here [at the NGO], we understood family was important to her […] We instead helped her son arrange therapy for him to quit drug use. When he was consuming, he would steal from his mother which is when he would become aggressive to her.’

According to the NGO’s staff, understanding clients’ language, overall profile, and what is important to them allows them to offer solutions to clients’ problems that are better aligned with their needs and values.

Knowledge of the ‘System’. The second intercultural competence valued and demonstrated by the NGO’s staff is a critical understanding of the British welfare and legal system. Indeed, one of the major services the NGO provides is welfare-related advice (e.g. access unemployment benefits, health-related benefits etc). As the NGO’s clients are all

13 All the names in this paper are pseudonymous.
documented, they are entitled to accessing state support. The NGO also provides general advice (e.g. how to deal and pay taxes) as well as job-related advice (e.g. Writing CVs, support with job applications). This requires them to be aware of British laws more broadly.

Holding a critical understanding of the ‘system’ means that advisors know how the British welfare and legal system affect each other. Paco, one of the advisors, provided an example:

‘She [the client] received a court order to appear in court because she had not paid council tax for months. They want her to bring the money to court and pay. She is scared and doesn’t want to go because she doesn’t have the money […] I told her not to worry…because showing up to court will give her the opportunity to explain her situation and they will reduce her monthly payment to something affordable now that we have applied for the unemployment benefit’

Advisors stressed that knowing how the ‘system’ works also means being able to deal with the subtle mechanisms that may exclude their clients from accessing welfare support. One such mechanism was pointed out by an advisor:

‘Often clients must complete multiple application forms up to fifteen pages long and support their cases with evidence, which can be declined if that evidence is not satisfactory or if it is not written in good English’

Some advisors also perceived in their welfare applicants a preferred hierarchy such as: ‘first British, then Europeans, finally…everybody else’.

To help clients overcome these forms of ‘informal exclusion’, advisors encourage clients to avoid specifying which country are from when they hold British or European passports in welfare applications. More fundamentally, advisors invite clients to not ‘normalise’ the issues they are facing. For instance, during individual appointments, advisors helping clients filling out health benefit applications often repeat to their clients: ‘When the form asks you how hard it is to get dressed, your response should be based on your worst days, when you feel the most pain’.

This becomes necessary to present strong applications and to minimise rejections based on ‘limited evidence’.
Communication & Mediation. Advisors demonstrated and highly valued the ability to communicate effectively with clients. This means that advisors can translate how the British welfare system works to them. This involves literal translation to Spanish, but also translating it in a logic that clients understand. For instance, in addition to one-to-one appointments, advisors organise workshops about welfare benefits, social housing, job-related rights and taxes. These workshops allow clients to ask more in-depth questions and compare each other’s cases.

Advisors also train clients to better articulate their cases during welfare assessment interviews scheduled after the welfare application is submitted. For example, when clients apply for health-related benefits, advisors meet them individually and run mock versions of the interview, ensuring clients emphasise their health conditions and describe in detail the impact it has in their daily life. An advisor emphasised the importance of this: ‘Clients only get one chance to fight for their case and convince the nurse that they need help, so they need to be able to pass their struggles across’.

Advisors stressed the importance of being able to communicate effectively with third parties. At times advisors act as mediators between clients and governmental actors who assess clients’ welfare applications. For instance, when clients’ welfare applications are rejected advisors contact governmental actors through phone calls or official letters to appeal against their decision. By referring to the eligibility criteria, the evidence provided in the rejected application, and to new evidence, advisors advocate for their clients’ cases, advisors advocate for their clients’ needs.

Similarly, advisors also mediate with other third parties such as housing agencies or employers. When unsuccessful, they offer clients alternative strategies. For instance, Josephine, a middle-aged Peruvian woman requested the NGO’s support to call her housing agency. Josephine was not given back her house deposit despite not having signed a rental agreement. Her advisor attempted to call the agent to understand the situation from his perspective. The agent refused to engage in conversation and instead threaten to take to court the advisor. While being unable to mediate the situation, Josephine’s advisor referred her to the Citizens Advice for legal advice.

Openness to Clients’ Involvement and New Ideas. The NGO also offers workshops to teach clients skills to widen their opportunities for employment (e.g. writing CVs, working free-lance work, etc.) and to be used in their everyday life. Advisors encourage clients to attend, run their own workshops, and put forward their ideas for new ones. David’s experience, a 30-
year-old Venezuelan client who is also a volunteer in the NGO, signifies the staff’s openness to new ideas:

‘I volunteered as a talking therapist in the organization […] Over time I realised that some people were too scared to come to therapy appointments individually, so I suggested to run a few group therapy sessions […] They were so popular that I deliver them until today’.

Being open also means offering the resources to turn those ideas into reality. The NGO’s staff welcomed David’s suggestion and provided the resources needed to implement it (e.g. subletting a hall for the sessions).

According to the staff, being open to clients’ ideas and active involvement in the NGO is fundamental to improve its services and ensure the needs of clients are continuously met. As one of the advisors mentioned, “the client is the expert of what they want and need in their community”. As such, advisors encourage clients to voice their opinions by inviting clients to become volunteers, hence, being more engaged in the NGO. Secondly, they encourage clients and volunteers to be part of the NGO’s management committee, where governance and major decisions about the organisation are taken.

**The Role of Intercultural Competence in Promoting Migrants’ Integration**

The staff’s intercultural competence traits allow the NGO to secure Latin Americans’ access to welfare and information, critical awareness of their rights and entitlements, social networks, and new knowledge which they use in their everyday life and that of other members of their community. This section presents and discusses how these outcomes promote Latin American migrants’ integration in their own community and British society across the three main dimensions identified by Pennix and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016), namely the socio-economic, cultural, and political one.

**Access to Welfare & Information.** The fact that advisors have knowledge of their clients, the British welfare system, and how to mediate relationships between clients and governmental stakeholders allows them to file successful welfare applications. The most recent report of the NGO shows that between April 2017 and March 2018 it followed the cases of more than 500 clients. While not all of them applied for welfare benefits, most did. Between April 2017 and March 2018 advisors appealed against 65 rejections, 58 were successful, and 7
were declined due to lack of supporting evidence. Accessing welfare provisions is crucial for clients to make ends meet and improve their socio-economic standing.

Similarly, the fact that advisors can communicate effectively with clients allow them to provide their Latin American clients with the information needed to devise long-term strategies which may enhance clients’ socio-economic opportunities. This is exemplified in the experience of Rosana, a Bolivian woman in her thirties who did not want to work in the cleaning sector anymore and wanted to return being a nurse—the job she was doing in Spain prior to moving to London. With the help of her advisor, Rosana figured out the steps to take, which involved becoming proficient in English and enrolling in a British educational course.

These findings seem to suggest that by enhancing access to welfare and information the staff’s intercultural competence become crucial in allowing the NGO to promote its clients’ socio-economic integration, namely the extent to which migrants have access to socio-economic opportunities such as housing, education and healthcare.

**Critical Awareness.** The fact that the staff can communicate effectively with clients and ‘translate’ the British legal and welfare system to them seem to play an important factor in making clients become aware of the entitlements and rights. This is best expressed by Juan’s words, a Venezuelan man in his thirties who reached out to this NGO when he had an accident at work and found himself unable to work:

‘She [an advisor] helped me a lot. She helped me with English. She also helped me to understand the system of benefits better. She told me that for those with mobility difficulties like me there are temporary benefits I can receive. She also told me there are discounts with transport and she helped me get those!’

Clients also learn to demand to have their rights respected. This is reflected in Annamaria’s story. As a single mother with three children and a serious health condition which require her to undergo dialysis every week, Annamaria is unable to work. As such, she was very grateful when she was granted social housing. However, she explained that when she moved in, she realised the house was not ‘nice’—it was mouldy, a door was about to fall out. After years of being supported by the NGO’s advisors in accessing the welfare and healthcare she needs, Annamaria learnt the importance of speaking out. Despite being turned down at the first attempt of asking to have the door fixed and the mould removed, she didn’t give up as she did not want to spend her own money to fix something she didn’t cause.
These findings suggest that the intercultural competence of the staff plays a crucial role in making clients aware of their rights and expect their entitlements to be respected. This critical awareness may be seen as crucial for socio-economic integration, given that to access socio-economic opportunities, housing, education and healthcare (in Annamaria’s case, her rights pertaining to housing), migrants need to be aware that they are indeed entitled to them.

**Social Networks.** The fact that advisors know how to secure clients’ entitlements and access to information, are mindful of their values, and are open to clients’ ideas and involvement seems to stimulate clients to regularly come to the NGO not only for advice but also to participate in the NGO’s workshops. Clients often describe the NGO’s staff as having their “best interests at heart”, as Pablo an Ecuadorian father put it during the interview. Other clients express this sentiment by referring to the NGO as a “family” or “my second home”.

Participating in the workshops offered by the NGO becomes a way in which clients establish and expand social networks. The words of Damaris, an Ecuadorian woman who lives in London with her children while her husband works in Spain, show the importance of the friendships she formed while participating in the various activities offered by the NGO: ‘When we come here [at the NGO], each of us tells their things. But sometimes we get sick or depressed […] We start isolating ourselves

[…] But we go to visit our friends’.

Other benefits of these social networks can be best appreciated through ethnographic observations. During workshops, clients often exchange information about jobs, their experiences with given employers, in applying for benefits, and information about educational courses or activities for children. The importance of social networks in promoting socioeconomic integration (e.g. finding better jobs opportunity or learning about information one did not know) and cultural integration (e.g. learning the cultural know-how and practices that will get one ahead) has been already discussed by scholars (e.g. Caselli & Grandi, 2011; Papadopoulos et al., 2013). What these findings seem to suggest is that these social networks emerge precisely because of the staff’s intercultural competence, which seems to play a central role in attracting clients to the NGO where these social networks can be developed.

**New Knowledge.** Finally, the fact that advisors are able to secure clients’ access to welfare support, a priority for many, and that they are open to clients’ active involvement in the organisation and ideas stimulates clients not only to run existing projects but also to develop
their own. For clients, participating in the NGO becomes an opportunity not only to show employers that they have volunteered and run projects in a British organisation in London, which staff and clients recognise as necessary to ‘move up the ladder’, but also to acquire new knowledge and skills to be used in their everyday life and also to improve the lives of other people.

The case of Stephanie, a Colombian woman in her forties, is an example of this. Stephanie was first a client of this NGO. She needed support because she found herself alone, with children, and unable to work due to having developed a serious health condition. This NGO helped her accessing the benefits and healthcare she needed. Afterwards, Stephanie decided to get involved in this NGO. At the beginning she helped out with social events. She then started volunteering in the reception of this NGO. Recently, she decided to enrol in a course to become a social advisor. She is also training within this NGO to become an advisor as she wants to help others with the knowledge that she acquired, as other people did for her at the time she was struggling. In the meantime, she is also participating in the outreach and representation sessions and meetings with the local authority. “We are invisible”, Stephanie says. Now, she wants to contribute to bring about a change, to contribute to the institutional recognition of Latin American migrants.

Stephanie’s story demonstrates the importance of the staff’s intercultural competence in promoting migrants’ integration at the socio-economic and cultural level. The NGO’s staff openness to clients’ involvement and ideas allows them to acquire new skills and cultural know-hows that their Latin American clients can then use to promote themselves in the labour market. More fundamentally, Stephanie’s story shows the importance of the staff’s intercultural competence in promoting migrants’ political integration. Pennix and GarcésMascareñas (2016) defined legal/political integration broadly as the extent to which migrants are granted the rights to be part of the political community. Yet, migrants’ political integration may be also understood as migrants’ active participation in in campaigns for migrant communities’ rights and visibility (Pardo, 2018).

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we explored the role that intercultural competence plays in migrant-led organisations’ delivery of services to migrant communities motivated by the need to identify the qualities that make migrant-led organisations successful in supporting migrants’ through the integration process. Specifically, we presented the case of a London-based NGO run by
British and Latin American staff that promotes Latin American migrants’ integration through welfare and general advice, workshops and sociocultural events.

We learned that intercultural competence plays a crucial role in the delivery of services of migrant-led organisations, adding to the literature that explored intercultural competence in the medical and educational context (Thom & Tirado, 2006; Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). In line with previous studies (Barrett, Huber & Reynolds, 2014), we also learned that intercultural competence does not depend on one’s cultural background, but rather on training and experience. Indeed, the NGO’s staff in this study was multicultural and developed intercultural competence through on-going training sessions and intercultural interactions with clients and volunteers. Staff learned the ‘tricks’ of the system and how to adapt their communication style by gaining experience whilst in their job and from their colleagues.

These findings emphasise not only the importance of training personnel and social workers in intercultural competence for the successful delivery of services to migrant communities but also the expertise of community workers. As such, community workers need to be taken seriously by local authorities and consulted on local policies that concern the community they work with. Indeed, interculturally competent community workers are knowledgeable of how to support the migrant communities they work with. We also found that community workers are also suitable mediators between such communities and local authorities, given their ability to communicate effectively with both parties and their understanding of the needs and values of the migrant communities. Taking community workers as the experts may become particularly important when there is not institutional recognition and therefore no knowledge of specific migrant communities, as in the case of Latin Americans (Pardo, 2018).

In essence, the research conducted demonstrated how intercultural competence becomes a crucial quality for migrant-led organisations aiming to support migrants through the process of integrating into a new society. In the case discussed in this study, the staff’s intercultural competence allows the NGO to enhance Latin Americans’ access to welfare and information, critical awareness of their rights and entitlements, social networks, and new knowledge. Indeed, shown by this study and previous research (Mayblin & James, 2019; Myrberg, 2011; Caselli & Grandi, 2011; Papadopoulos et al., 2013), we learned that accessing welfare, information, social networks and developing a critical awareness of ones’ rights allow migrants to learn the cultural know-how to get ahead, to become politically active, and improve their socio-economic standings or at least devise long-term strategies to do so.
More fundamentally, this research suggests that intercultural competence becomes a quality and a practice that allows migrant-led NGOs to support migrants’ integration in their community. As shown in the findings, the staff’s intercultural competence made clients acquire the knowledge, skills, and political awareness to improve their lives and contribute to their community within and outside the context of the NGO. The fact that the staff was open to clients’ active involvement in the NGO and willing to learn from clients was of fundamental importance for the NGO, as it allowed the staff to constantly improve and adapt their services to the migrant community they support. Ultimately, the case study presented leads to an appreciation of the role of intercultural competence not only in delivering services to migrant communities and supporting migrants through the integration process, but also for the creation of spaces where new knowledge can emerge and be used by the community for the community.

Notes

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Domiziana Turcatti is a DPhil candidate in Migration Studies at the University of Oxford (2019-2022) funded by the Clarendon Scholarship Fund. As part of her DPhil, she is investigating the experiences of the families of onward Colombian migrants who moved from Spain to London in response to the 2008 economic crisis. Funded by the Gates Cambridge Scholarship, she obtained an MPhil degree in Sociology of Marginality and Exclusion from the University of Cambridge in July 2019 where she began her research on the experiences of Latin American parents in London and the role that migrant-led organisations play in their lives. Prior to moving to the UK, she obtained a BA in Liberal Arts and Sciences from Amsterdam University College (2015-2018) during which she investigated the experiences of Moroccan Dutch youth in the Netherlands focusing specifically on the role of peers and community leaders in supporting Moroccan Dutch youth to gain a place in Dutch society.

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Articles. Strand 2: Bilingualism and Multilingual Education
Bora Kim. Obstacles and Ways Forward in the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Peru

ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the implementation side of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) in Peru. IBE is an educational policy mainly to provide indigenous students with mother-tongue based education, and foster intercultural dialogue to enhance mutual understanding amongst students from different cultural backgrounds. Multiple values and rationales are lying in this policy, such as quality education for all, preserving cultural diversity, and decolonisation. Peru was historically the heart of Inca Empire, which was later colonized by Spain from 1533 for about 300 years. However, still 47 indigenous languages are spoken in the country and 17% of the Peruvian population have these languages as their mother tongues. In this regard, IBE certainly matters to Peru, and it would be the key policy in order to achieve social cohesion.

The paper largely divides into two parts: 1) identification of existing obstacles which impede effective operation of the policy, and 2) demonstration of contributing factors for its successful implementation found in the qualitative, field research. Based on the findings classified into these two categories, the paper draws suggestions in the conclusion section.

Note: This paper is taken from my dissertation for MA International Education and Development at the University of Sussex.
1. Introduction

The policy for IBE was enacted in the late 1980s in Peru and kept being updated until 2018 in collaboration with local experts and international organisations such as UNICEF Peru. However, goals of the policy look too far to reach in reality. The superordinate goals of the policy - 1) improving education quality for indigenous students by providing them with education in their mother tongues, and 2) fostering intercultural dialogue in the society (Peru. MOE (Ministry of Education) 2018a) - are not achieved at all. Surveys show that there has been no progress, but rather the situation is getting worse. For example, the educational gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students as shown in PISA tests was widened to double or triple in reading or mathematics between the year of 2000 and 2015 (Education Inequalities 2019). Also, discrimination still prevails and is quite common in Peru; half of Peruvians said they felt discriminated in their daily lives (Peru. Ministry of Culture 2019).

Below is the list of interviewees. Interviews lasted about an hour on average with each interviewees. Interviewees were selected on a snowball method mostly, and interviews were semi-structured.

Table. List of interviewees

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<tr>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Organisation/position</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Shipibo community/ mother</td>
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2. Research findings and discussion

2.1. Obstacles in IBE implementation

2.1.1. Teacher education

Teacher often appeared at the centre of the problems in all interviews.

Interviewees said, *More bilingual teachers are needed*, or *Pre-service teacher education (both for IBE specifically and in general) is not appropriate or sufficient.* I made three categories to analyse the situation as the following.

- **Situation analysis A: Bilingual teacher shortage**

  The implementers both in Lima and Iquitos asserted significant deficit of bilingual teachers. The coordinator/leader of AIDESEP at FORMABIAP in Iquitos, Loreto
We accepted about 25 students this year, [...] There is demand of 4,000 bilingual teachers in Loreto province, but we are far behind. There are much more students who want to enter this teacher training institute. [...] We lack budget. International aid has decreased a lot. Now only Liechtenstein is supporting us. [...] The number of entering students is different every year. Sometimes we had to wait for a couple of years to gather funds, without accepting any new students.

25 seems to be a small number especially considering that there is more demand and the institute is assumed as an ideal IESP in the country with good curriculum and tradition, and the more problematic fact is that the number is different every year. This would cause instable supply of teachers and unsustainability of IBE teacher training in Loreto region. Small number of graduates from IESP also means less quality assurance of IBE teachers at school. The coordinator added:

At schools, there are only a few teachers who studied IBE, which creates conflicts between them and those who did not study IBE.

The conflicts mentioned in the quote implies that IESP graduates might face difficulties or backlash in implementing suitable pedagogies at classrooms even though they themselves are capable of doing so, due to lack of understanding and incapability of their colleagues who did not formally study IBE. As of 2018, there were 3,482 bilingual teachers (who speak an indigenous language at intermediate level) in Loreto province (Peru. MOE 2018b), which was below the demand, according to the coordinator.

Securing sufficient number of qualified bilingual teachers is not only about the budget, though. There is logistical difficulty as well, as said by the other coordinator. All

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14 FORMABIAP was established by AIDESEP in 1988 in Iquitos, and after, it founded a teacher training institute for the Peruvian Amazon. For the foundation, AIDESEP provided land, Spanish government constructed the buildings, and some European states such as Denmark, Norway, Swiss and Germany funded for students’ tuitions, though the majority of students these days are funded by Beca 18 (Peruvian government’s scholarship programme for students with good grades, but from low-income families).
students need funds to move from their communities and stay in the dormitory here. It is a five-year course, which includes 54 weeks of field investigation. This quote shows, even though the institute is located in the region (Iquitos, the capital of the Province), there is still a distance to indigenous communities and this occurs costs that cannot be neglected in teacher education; indigenous youngsters needed to come to the city to access quality education to become teachers, and for field investigations and practice, additional travels and logistical issues were remaining.

From a linguistic point of view, bilingual education is not easy. A Spanish language teacher at IESP in Iquitos addressed the difficulties in enhancing indigenous students’ reading comprehension. She said, *Children are intelligent. The problem is teachers. They are not capable or professional to teach.* She implied that lack of professionalism in bilingual teachers in Peru has led to indigenous students’ poor achievements in languages on the academic level. Especially, the problem is that there are not many text materials in indigenous languages in Peru as they were recently alphabetised (Peru. MOE 2013). It was also observed in the interview with an indigenous mother, that she was feeling awkward to read when I handed her a consent form. The Spanish teacher interviewee explained, *such circumstance (indigenous peoples not exposed to many texts) is a barrier for indigenous peoples to develop language comprehension.* Considering Cummins (1980)’s argument, that language understanding and cognitive thinking in L1 could help with enhancing the ability in L2, indigenous students’ low access to text materials in their native languages can cause weak development in Spanish as well. Zavala (2016)’s analysis backs up this argument: indigenous students’ language comprehension does not reach high levels, including indigenous students who graduated from IESP for IBE.

Insufficient number of bilingual teachers and inadequate teacher education lowers indigenous students’ access to IBE and the quality of education. It was reported that only 38% of indigenous students at primary school were provided with IBE (UNICEF & INEI (Peruvian
National Institute of Statistics and Informatics) 2011), and 94% of teachers who were teaching indigenous students in pre-primary/primary/secondary schools in Peru did not acquire training for IBE. 40% of them could not speak indigenous languages (Defensoría del pueblo 2016).

- **Situation analysis B: incomplete understanding in IBE and its weak impact**

  Coordinators at FORMABIAP had firm views towards IBE, and explained the situation:

  *Peru is a country of rich cultures, ethnicities, languages; the entire education system should respond to it.* [...] *Currently, when students and parents require IBE, then the government can approve, but it is not like that teachers would inform IBE to students and parents.*

  The first sentence means that the entire education system, regardless of different types of school and subjects, as interculturality should be reflected in their curricula and school environment (Grant & Portera 2011). However, the second sentence implies that IBE is not implemented systematically (UNESCO 2018), thus its impact is small.

  Besides, the coordinators often criticised the government for its lack of understanding in IBE as below.

  *The government – both central and regional - does not have understanding in the implication of IBE, its particular characteristic differentiated from other school curricula. It requires interdisciplinary work, a team, so to say. We need linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, ecologists, historians and so on who could collaborate for the implementation of IBE.* [...] *When we urged that we needed a certain number of such professionals, the government said, ‘for what do you need that?’ [...] The country does not understand this yet. FORMABIAP has survived thanks to international cooperation, not by the government.*

  The particular characteristic of IBE, its interdisciplinary aspect, is because intercultural education concerns about students’ attitudes, worldviews, and ability to communicate and
understand others (Grant & Portera 2011). The coordinator certainly recognises this, however the government seems not understanding at all, based on what the government said regarding FORMABIAP’s requirement. The last comment shows that for Loreto region, IBE is severely relying on foreign aid, and the Peruvian government was completely unaccountable. Many scholars have pointed out the dependence on international organisations with regards to IBE policy making and implementation (García 2004; López 2009; Trapnell 2003).

- **Situation analysis C: unprofessional attitudes of teachers**

IBE requires teachers’ readiness for its particular characteristics, and in Peru it has not been achieved. In my interviews, it was seen that not particularly as to IBE, but teacher education in general was being done very poorly in Peru. A coordinator at FORMABIAP said,

*Before, people who did not go through pre-service education at all could already start working as a teacher, and while in service, they used to get teacher’s training occasionally on vacation for several weeks.*

Zavala (2016) already depicted this situation. This implies that quantity of teachers is below the demand, teacher education is not strictly managed, and teachers would not be professional at work.

- **Reason analysis: lack of the government’s accountability**

The mentioned issues in the situation analysis: bilingual teacher shortage, lack of budget and poor teacher education, in the end all fall into the government’s accountability. Interviewed coordinators’ such attitude implies lack of trust and partnerships between FORMABIAP and the government.

*We (AIDESEP) required adequate curriculum to indigenous peoples in the Amazon. The government said, ‘if you want your teachers, you should find funds for that.’ So, the villages*

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15 The coordinator at FORMABIAP said that international organisations had become skeptical in their support to IBE in Peru, saying that Peru became a middle-income country and the Peruvian government was not showing commitment to IBE.
looked for funds and an Italian organisation in 1988 supported us. This quote demonstrates that from its foundation, the government was indifferent and unsupportive with FORMABIAP’s work. The government’s words ‘if you want your teachers, you should find funds’ were words of denial and abandonment of indigenous identity and culture.

On the issue of the government’s responsibility, the interviewee from the MOE brought up with corruption issue:

For instance, the central government distributes books to schools to different regions, however they do not reach the regions properly, due to corruption during the procurement process.

According to her, even though the central government was capable to afford all textbooks in the country, due to corruption in the supplying process, students nationwide were not properly receiving the books. This was easily seen in my interviewees: for example, Kukama mother in Iquitos said she had to buy textbooks, and each one costs 20 to 50 soles (USD 6 to 14 equivalent).

2.1.2. Indigenous students’ socioeconomic status and their vulnerability

Indigenous family’s low income and their economic difficulty was strongly underlined by the two indigenous mothers during their interviews. According to the mothers, the household economy was the only decisive factor on whether children could enter tertiary education or not. The mother from Kukama community answered to my questions as below.

My son likes to study. But here we do not have many facilities, maybe because we are not economically stable. We earn money through tourism. When there are no visitors, we cannot sell anything. […] Well, we receive no financial support (from the government). So, even though he wants to study, it completely depends on our income. He wants to study, but it is also possible that he would need to work. […] Before, we used to sell yuca, banana, and so on. We lived only by farming (many years ago). But
these days we have floods, and they take everything away. Crops get spoiled. (I: Does it happen often?)

Every year.

(I: Does the government help with something?)

No. Nothing. We have to survive by ourselves.

This quote depicts how vulnerable indigenous families would be financially and socially. Their family income was completely relying on how many tourists would come visit their village day by day. They did not possess degrees or job skills, therefore they could not earn good money in the job market, and there was no government support for them; their low socioeconomic status has a structural problem. Her last comment that they had to survive by ourselves, shows she got no support from anyone, nor she had trust in anyone. Another issue is that they were left out in a rural area, where there were no secondary or tertiary schools in the region, or related infrastructure.

Economic status of Shipibo community in Lima was difficult as well. According to the mother and teacher interviewed in Cantagallo, Lima, the government recently started to collect tax from vendors’ space in the street. The interviewee mother could not afford the tax, therefore she was asking others who could sell her handcraft stuff on her behalf, or selling stuff through her personal network. The Shipibo mother said, The government does not have willingness (to support us). We want to be organized (regarding their economic activities and living).

Indigenous peoples’ socioeconomic status has a significant meaning in their education, in fact. Indigenous students’ aspiration level was same as the non-indigenous when their socioeconomic status was controlled according to Pasquier-Doumer & Brandon (2015). However, indigenous students’ aspiration diminished as time went by, realising their limited
socioeconomic sources, and often failed to make their aspiration come true in their academic paths (Pasquier-Doumer & Brandon 2015; Hynsjö & Damon 2015).

2.1.3. Lack of resources, infrastructure and technology

OECD (2019b) addressed as main barriers for Peru towards high-quality education, “Poor infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, outdated curricula, and a lack of well-trained teachers.” I could certainly see this when I visited the Shipibo Community School in Cantagallo. I was asked by the principal to buy them several brooms, and the Shipibo mother’s one of complaints was that the child did not have a chair in the classroom. When I visited the school, it only had desks and chairs in a poor status, coloring pens, a board and textbooks, without learning materials such as screens, maps, musical instruments, tools for science experiments or school facilities such as a library.

When I questioned what made the education in vulnerable or rural areas most difficult to the teacher at the Shipibo Community School, sent from Pucallpa, he answered: Technology and infrastructure. In rural areas, students do not possess enough materials for learning, having only textbooks and nothing more, whereas children here (in Lima) might use electronic devices and internet (with which you can learn). According to him, poor infrastructure and technology was significantly affecting children’s learning in rural areas, and this was highly relevant for indigenous students’ education as “Indigenous children are significantly less likely to attend a school with access to tap water, a phone, the internet, toilets, a library, dictionaries or encyclopedias, books or computers.” (Hynsjö and Damon 2015 p.11)

2.1.4. Discriminative and non-inclusive culture

School culture is important to provide suitable environment for IBE. UNESCO (2018, p. v) said “Provision of education in itself is not sufficient. The school environment
needs to adapt to and support the specific needs of those on the move.” As IBE fosters equal relationships, and mutual understanding and respect one another, school culture needs to be democratic. However, discrimination and violence are prevailed in Peru, so are in schools. Discrimination against indigenous students are done even by teachers sometimes. During the class observation at teacher training institute in Iquitos, the professor underlined,

*Asking questions to children is not to find faults and scold, but to know their learning status and encourage them.*

That the professor was highlighting this message, ironically showed that in reality, finding faults and scolding is often done. In fact, by most Peruvians who did not have particular relevance to IBE or education in general, addressed this issue. They said teachers put aside and discriminate the students whose grades were behind rather than encouraging and including them. Such school climate of discrimination, and noninclusiveness must be contradictory and harmful to IBE implementation.

People’s non-inclusive attitude is as malicious as economic issues for the marginalised. Here is an example: I was told in FORMABIAP, that many indigenous students who won enough scholarship to study at universities in Lima drop out and come back to their hometowns. It was not because of economic reasons or any residential issues at all. However, *the students could not adapt well to Lima city*, they said. The coordinators explained that *the city was very different from where they were living, they did not have anyone to support them* (not economically but socially or psychologically, for instance). *The indigenous students felt isolated and they quit studying and returned home.* In other words, the students succeeded in physically moving to the capital, with no economic difficulties, however, they were not accepted socially and culturally, so they felt isolated without personal networks and could not

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16 Some indigenous students invited to Lima through ‘Tinkuy’ programme, said teachers made fun of or embarrass them for their traditional clothes and so on. Source from an official at the Ministry of Education.
mingle well and settle in Lima. This example demonstrates how embedded discrimination, segregation and non-inclusiveness in the society could impede achieving equity and social cohesion in the country.

2.2. Contributors to successful IBE implementation

2.2.1. Self-determination and identity

Most of the indigenous interviewees voluntarily showed a strong will to value and preserve their indigenous cultures though they were not asked particularly. In their semi-structured interviews, they often showed self-determination as a key to preserve their own culture, and to empower themselves. Shipibo teacher at the Shipibo community in Catagallo said,

At first, they felt ashamed when speaking it (not anymore after I started teaching the language, though). But most importantly, it is our language. (Why it has been disappearing is because) Mestizos took it out from us. Why? Because we did not value it. [...] If we stop speaking our language, who will value it?

He said Shipibo people were ashamed of speaking their language at first. Indigenous peoples’ feeling shameful about their languages was due to colonisation experience (Trapnell 2003). Baker (2011) said people’s identity and perception about the language affects bilinguals’ language choice. However, based on the Shipibo teacher’s teaching experience at Cantagallo, this can be changed by education.

Another point was that indigenous peoples see themselves as independent subjects with strong wills, capacity, and power to bring change for their future. Such view accords with how ILO Convention 169, recognizes indigenous peoples. According to Aikman and May (2003, p. 140), the Convention states that “Indigenous groups are not simply one of a number of ethnic minority groups, competing for the limited resources of the nation-state, and therefore
entirely subject to its largesse, but are peoples, with the associated rights of self-determination attributable to the latter under international law.”

In addition, the Shipibo mother said:

_We came here for children’s education. People have rights to live wherever they want._

_We are here, close to the city, giving information, and providing our arts and culture._

It is illustrated here that she was clearly recognising her rights to make decisions for her life and her children. This is in line with the Article 3 in the Resolution by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) saying “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

On the other hand, the coordinator FORMABIAP explained why indigenous peoples need to firmly stand based on indigenous identity.

_Indigenous students need to learn about their roots first, and then they can go to cities and live their lives on their own ways. But firstly, they need to learn about their ancestors. Otherwise, they feel that they do not belong anywhere, neither indigenous nor Hispanic._

The coordinator here admitted mobilities and life choices of indigenous peoples, however, asserted the importance of knowing about their roots. If not knowing, they would not know about who they are, be confused with their identity, and have weak self-perception, his words imply.

### 2.2.2. Community-based pedagogy

Before moving to the pedagogy for IBE (observed at FORMABIAP), I would like to bring some evidence of how the school curriculum was towards indigeneity before. The coordianator/representative of AIDESEP, himself from Awajún community said, _When I was young, I was told at school ‘your languages and customs are not valued for anything. Now from what you learn at school, you will be civilised.’ Nothing about indigenous peoples was_
talked at school. Nothing. (I: Then where did you learn Awajún language, tradition and history?) At home. From my parents and grandparents.

His words show how school education was trampling indigenous peoples’ culture and self-esteem, even after the colonial time. Aikman and May (2003, p. 142-143) said “Formal education and schooling as an institution that has contributed significantly to the loss of indigenous identity, control and self-determination. Schooling has been explicitly and implicitly a site of rejection of indigenous knowledge and language, it has been used as a means of assimilating and integrating indigenous peoples into a ‘national’ society and identity at the cost of their indigenous identity and social practices.” In fact, this is still happening in Peru, as only the small number of schools are implementing IBE, and other schools are not incorporating indigenous cultures in its curriculum or school environment, and according to Gorski (2008), even intercultural education is often not free from the power relations from colonisation.

Taking this into account, FORMABIAP’s curriculum is differentiated from others, mostly in a sense that it has successfully incorporated indigenous values to the school curriculum, through community-based pedagogy. The Spanish teacher who was engaged in pedagogy and curriculum designing at FORMABIAP said,

*For instance, teachers take students out of the classroom, go out to the field, and let the children see, experience, and interact with the nature and with peers. They could learn about what we (indigenous group) eat, how those crops grow, and how we harvest them. Some scientific knowledge can be explained by the teacher at the same time. [...] We can also invite a person from the community to show how we weave strips.*

The quote contains several characteristics of FORMABIAP’s curriculum. This quote implies that teaching and learning is done by putting children at the centre and by their participation. Also, learning is done in an integrative way, as depicted in the quote that they learn about
indigenous culture (what they eat and how they harvest) and scientific knowledge at the same time. In the curriculum made by FORMABIAP for primary schools, there are only six subjects: communication (both for indigenous/Spanish language), Social Personal (learning citizenship), Mathematics, Physical education, Arts, and Science.\(^{17}\)

Secondly, people in the community are actively engaged in education. They contribute to showing indigenous customs to students and transcending them. Teachers also listen to community’s demands and reflect them to school activities. The fact that the teacher training institute of FORMABIAP accept students from four villages (Awajún, Aymara, Quechua, and Shipibo) and send them back to their home village (though the community can be different\(^{18}\)) as teachers, make the teachers more committing and knowledgeable to the community. Furthermore, during the five years of course at the institute, 54 weeks are spent in the communities\(^{19}\) to do investigation and practice pedagogy, mostly accompanied by professors.

Thirdly, their education contains values of sustainable development. As land is a classroom, textbooks and learning materials, students would internalise a belief that land is not a distant object, however, a base that they should appreciate, learn from and take care of.\(^{20}\) Contribution of indigenous knowledges to protection of environments and sustainable development is already recognised by the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states indigenous and local knowledge as a key element in sustainable development, especially for protection of environments and natural resources, and argues that local knowledge and modern science could generate synergy (UNESCO 2002).

3. Conclusion

\(^{17}\) Explained by a teacher interviewee.
\(^{18}\) The four villages include 183 communities, according to the coordinators.
\(^{19}\) For initial four years, the half of second semester (nine weeks) each year is spent in the communities, and in the last year, students spend the entire second semester in the communities.
\(^{20}\) This is a concept of land in indigenous cultures, explained by the interviewee teacher.
IBE is a beautiful project, the coordinator at FORMABIAP said, when asked what made her commit to it for long years. Its theme is complicated, however, it doubtlessly has universal values that matter not only to the Peruvian society but to the entire world – inclusive, and quality education is stated in the Sustainable Development Goals 4, as followed: “quality education: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” (UNESCO 2018, p. 17)

The policy aims to bring equity to the society particularly by finally recognising and valuing the indigenous and Afro-descendants students who were suppressed and ignored for the last hundreds of years (García 2004). This requires much efforts and work in different aspects. For example, the Peruvian government in the 1980s had to start with alphabetisation of indigenous languages which were oral (Peru. MOE 2013) to make textbooks and learning materials in indigenous languages. Considering that instruction of indigenous languages at schools was prohibited until the 1970s in Peru (García 2004), this was a drastic change done by the government.

However, still, the impact of IBE is small both in terms of access and quality (World Bank 2015). UNESCO (2018, p. 26) analysed that in Latin America, “Intercultural, bilingual education is a major initiative to reduce exclusion but is not systematically implemented.” Unsystematic implementation signifies less control and management in educational quality as articulated in the findings section. Teacher education is not enforced properly, without sufficient budget and good understanding in IBE. Besides, school facilities and learning materials are in a poor status, not suitably backing up the learning process. There are also social factors to overcome, such as prevailing discrimination in the society, and socioeconomic gaps. Below are my suggestions categorised into three sections, to make the policies effective.

21 Linguists went to the local areas, learned indigenous languages and knowledges, and then they had to teach the indigenous peoples how their languages worked (Zavala 2016).
3.1. **Bottom-up approach, with central management**

Firstly, top-down policy designing should be put aside (López 2009). Governance for the implementation of IBE should be decentralized, however in a systematic way, under proper supervision. As viewed in the earlier section, community-based pedagogy is suitable for IBE, and IBE could have very different contexts and characteristics within Peru, depending on the region, community, infrastructure and so on. Accordingly, the Peruvian MOE has to delegate the authority to regional offices, however, more importantly, the MOE still needs to be able to manage the quality in terms of teacher education, budgets and infrastructure. The MOE can start by identifying the targeted students first: who they are, how many there are, what the situations are, and so on. Hekia Parata, the former Minister of Education in New Zealand (OECD 2019a), suggested this way of making registration, to know about the circumstances of each indigenous student and community, and to follow up with their progress. Although this could be hard in the Peruvian context as many indigenous children are in remote areas, Peru at least needs to designate responsible IESPs more, and monitor the situation. Currently the MOE publishes only national guidelines, and the rest is being done on a voluntary basis by schools and IESPs. This way the MOE does not have accountable channels to gauge the impact of IBE and assure its quality. For example, currently, *schools which want to implement IBE voluntarily report themselves to the MOE, and teachers acquire education on a voluntary basis*, according to the coordinators at FORMABIAP.

However, what needs to be done is that the MOE takes initiatives to find indigenous students in the country and builds IBE schools or incorporates an adequate curriculum to the existing schools where they attend.

3.2. **Cross-sectional cooperation**
Secondly, this policy needs cross-sectional cooperation, and needs to be expanded into the mainstream. This means cross-sectional work within the education system, and in the whole society; according to Delpit (1992), in order to reconstruct social orders, incorporating different (marginalised) cultural learnings in the curriculum is needed. However, currently, IBE is focusing on the indigenous students only and other regular schools and Hispanic students are indifferent to it. If the majority of society are not asked to learn about indigenous cultures, discrimination will still exist, and indigenous peoples will not feel accepted and welcome in the society based on their root identities, by who they are. Secondly, cross-sectional collaboration in the entire society means that other sectors should also take into account the respect and understanding in the cultures from the minorities. For example, indigenous students learn their languages at school, but if they are not valued or used at all in the society, at the job market, people will not value the languages, and they will not survive in the end. Indigenous languages in Peru has official regional use currently (López 2009), however this should come into effect.

3.3. **Institutional socioeconomic support for the indigenous**

Socioeconomic support for the marginalised is highlighted for inclusive and intercultural education (Grant & Portera 2011; UNESCO 2018). In Peru, there are a few scholarship programmes at the national level, however the number of students who benefit is tiny and they are limited to those who obtain excellent grades. Rather than this merit-based and selective aid, there should be more equitable and institutional socioeconomic support to indigenous families to provide them with real opportunities, so that their children do not give up in the middle of their academic paths merely due to economic reasons, which would reproduce inequality in the society. Of course, there should be more governmental expenditure for rural areas as well to reduce life quality and educational gaps.
Below is an illustration of my theory of change for successful implementation of IBE in Peru, as explained in this section. There is far to go, to make IBE infiltrated in the Peruvian schools and the society, however, Peru has been making a leap compared to decades of years ago. With more systematic and cross-sectional work, and the government’s strong will and commitment, Peru will make steps forward and build a harmonious society with its rich assets in cultures and languages.

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Articles. Strand 3: Cooperative Learning and other interactive learning approaches
ABSTRACT

Educational research has for many years demonstrated that cooperative learning fosters the development of social and cognitive skills in students. In the Italian classroom, however, largely transmissive methods still prevail and teachers are faced with numerous challenges when trying to put into practice what they have learned in dedicated training courses. This research intends to explore the difficulties experienced in the classroom one year after a short (10-25 hours) experiential training course, through a quantitative survey that involved 102 elementary and middle school teachers, investigating their beliefs and perceived self-efficacy and discussing the main challenges that emerged at the relational and organizational levels.

Keywords: In-service teacher education; Cooperative Learning; Training transfer; self-efficacy; beliefs; elementary and middle school

Introduction

Educational systems are increasingly being called upon to prepare students to become democratic, committed, tolerant citizens, and to develop the social skills that are indispensable for life in our ever more complex societies (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019; OECD, 2010, 2015). In its Agenda for Sustainable Development (2017), UNESCO also stresses the absolute strategic importance of eduction, which it calls a “powerful agent of change”, declaring that
teachers must adopt a “transformative pedagogy that engages learners in participative, systemic, creative and innovative thinking and acting processes in the context of local communities and learners’ daily lives” (ibidem, p. 52)

Research on education (Buchs & Butera, 2015; D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Mendo-Lázaro, León-del-Barco, Felipe-Castaño, Polo-del-Río, & Iglesias-Gallego, 2018; Sharan, 2017; Slavin, 2014) has for some time emphasised the contribution of cooperative learning not only to the development of cognitive skills, but also to the building of positive relations between the members of a group: planning cooperative learning paths enables the valorisation of difference (education for otherness) (Briançon, 2019), giving plenty of space to a plurality of skills; it places the group itself at the centre of the educational activity, encouraging mutually beneficial relations between the participants (win-win); facilitating a sense of social belonging, the cultivation of self-awareness and the sense of an “us”, building up knowledge and collaboration around a defined objective and fostering the social and intercultural skills (Ferguson-Patrick & Jolliffe, 2018; Malusà, 2014, 2017; Milani, 2019) needed in today’s societies.

Teachers, however, struggle to implement cooperative learning methods22 (Gillies & Boyle, 2010; Moges, 2019; Mukuka, Mutarutinya, & Balimuttajjo, 2019; Salim, Abdullah, Haron, Hussain, & Ishak, 2019; Sharan, 2010) and mainly transmissive methods still prevail23 in Italian classrooms (Cavalli & Argentin, 2010; Novara, 2017).

Some authors (Sharan, 2010; Tarozzi & Torres, 2016) attest the need for experiential pathways that enable teachers to really master the active strategies that are indispensable in the 21st century’s increasingly complex environments (Portera & Grant, 2017). In Italy, a few years ago, in-service training was made obligatory (in Law 107/2015) and a three-year plan was mapped out – subsequently also underlined in the next triennium – which valorises non-frontal initiatives connected with active methodologies for inclusive, collaborative teaching (MIUR, 2016), and reaffirms the state’s recognition of the strategic importance of training for the development of schools’ human and professional capital.

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22 Cooperative learning activities have to entail: cooperative skills, face-to-face interaction, group processing, positive interdependence, individual and team responsibility.

23 An Italian survey – conducted by the IARD Institute (Research Network on conditions and youth policies) on over 3,000 teachers – underlines that over 70% primary school teachers often teach frontal lessons, while only 30% introduce cooperative learning methods into their classroom; this percentage increases considerably in secondary schools (Cavalli & Argentin, 2010).
Despite this, educational pathways often fail to give teachers the necessary tools for promoting active methods in schools (Malusà, 2019b). While a lack of adequate training seems to be among the principal causes of the ineffectiveness of their intervention (OECD, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2009), it is also true that other variables (personal, organisational, systemic, socio-cultural) can facilitate or hinder the promotion of active, innovative teaching methods in the classroom.

Some authors have investigated the challenges experienced by teachers endeavouring to use cooperative learning, through an in-depth analysis of their beliefs and values (Kohn, 1992). The important part played by a teacher’s beliefs when s/he is implementing cooperative learning activities also emerges from a recent intercultural study carried out by Pescarmona (2017), which focuses on the barriers to equity that beliefs and habits can reinforce and suggests that teachers have to develop a heightened sense of “agency” to facilitate innovation at school.

Jolliffe & Snaith (2017) collected attitudinal data at the beginning and end of a teacher education programme, analysing the emerging structural challenges, which were time pressures and curricular alignment; the same difficulties emerged from a study by Buchs, Filippou, Pulfrey and Volpe (2017), who examined the beliefs of more than 200 elementary school teachers in Switzerland who had implemented cooperative learning strategies in their classes after a two day training workshop on this approach.

The present study was largely inspired by the above mentioned research (Buchs et al., 2017), although its context (northern Italy) is different, and the phenomenon is examined taking into account the effect of another variable, that of perceived self-efficacy – understood as “a future-oriented belief about the level of competence a person expects he or she will display in a given situation” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 787) – the influence of which has also been demonstrated in other studies (Aiello, Pace, Dimitrov, & Sibilio, 2017; Jolliffe & Snaith, 2017; Miller, Ramirez, & Murdock, 2017).

**Research question**

This study explores the difficulties elementary and middle school teachers find in implementing cooperative learning activities in their classrooms, one year after a short period (10-25 hours) of experiential in-service training with Scintille.it, a private Italian teacher education enterprise approved by the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research (MIUR). In particular:
RQ1. About a year after a short experiential training course in the implementation of cooperative learning methods, which of the methods explored are the teachers who participated still using in their classes? And how frequently?

RQ2. What are the main difficulties experienced by teachers when engaging their classes in cooperative activities? Are there differences between elementary and middle schools?

RQ3. What are the links between their beliefs, their sense of self-efficacy, the difficulties they experience and the activities they offer?

RQ4. What further training needs do the teachers express?

Method

First step: teacher training

In 2017 and 2018, 15 courses (involving 435 participants) were monitored. Each 10-25 hour training course consisted of 4 sessions on:

- Cooperative learning principles
- Introduction to social skills
- Introduction to the “Leaning together” model
- Cooperative learning activities educational planning

Various experiential learning (Sharan & Sharan, 1987) activities were proposed: cooperative games (Cohen & Lotan, 2014), five fingers, place map, gallery tour, numbered heads together, inside-outside circle, think-pair-square-share (Kagan & Kagan, 1992), Learning together model (D. W. Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994), Jigsaw (Aronson & Goode, 1980), and general discussion.

The courses were led by 9 different trainers.

Second step: evaluation of the training

At the end of the course, the participants completed an online satisfaction survey about the training, which consisted of 10 simple items with open questions and a 10-point Likert scale. Post-training results (Malusà, Matini, & Pavan, 2019) indicate high levels of satisfaction ($\mu=8.82$; $\text{Mo}=10.00$; $\text{SD}=1.18$), interest ($\mu=9.15$; $\text{Mo}=10.00$; $\text{SD}=1.04$) and declared participation by teachers in group work ($\mu=9.03$; $\text{Mo}=10.00$; $\text{SD}=1.12$); the trainers were seen as attentive to the needs of the participants ($\mu=9.35$; $\text{Mo}=10.00$; $\text{SD}=0.89$); there was a significant correlation between satisfaction and perceived engagement (0.748 $p<0.01$-Two-
Tailed), independent of the training schedule and whether the teachers came from elementary or middle schools.

**Third step after one year: implementation at school**

**Sample**

12-18 months after the training courses, the participants were sent another, more detailed, online questionnaire, to which 102 people (23.44%) responded: 29.4% middle school teachers and 70.6% elementary school teachers, from 46 schools located in 5 different Italian regions (Trentino Alto-Adige, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria and Umbria). Teaching experience range: 1 to > 30 years (15.7% 1-10 years; 34.3% 11-20 years; 22.5% 21-30 years; 27.5% > 30 years), in different disciplines. 28.4% of the teachers have just one class; 46.1% have two; 14.4% 3 or 4; 10.8% have more than 4. Respondents were asked to focus on the experiences they had had during the last 3 (teaching) years.

**Measures**

This self-report questionnaire consisting of 70 items (Cronbach α >.70) with a 5 or 6-point Likert scale and multiple choice questions was selected to investigate beliefs (de Vries, Helms-Lorenz, & van de Grift, 2014), perceived self-efficacy (Moè, Pazzaglia, & Friso, 2010), frequency of cooperative vs traditional strategies (Buchs et al., 2017); difficulties experienced (Buchs et al., 2017; Wafaa, 2011) and training needs (Malusà, 2019a) (Table 1). The questions in each array followed a random order.

The questions on the above areas were preceded by a first section consisting of 10 questions regarding participants’ personal data (educational qualifications, years of teaching, work place, number of classes, materials, previous training).

The estimated time needed to fill out the questionnaire was 20-25 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions test</th>
<th>Cronbach α</th>
<th>No. items</th>
<th>point Likert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>.763</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived self-efficacy</td>
<td>.887</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of cooperative vs traditional strategies</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties experienced</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 In Italy elementary school is attended by children aged from 5/6 to 10/11; middle school by 11 to 13/14 year olds.
In particular:

(a) **Pedagogical beliefs**
8 items (translated and adapted to the Italian context) were selected from De Vries et al.‘s questionnaire (2014), 4 *subject matter-oriented beliefs* and 4 *student-oriented beliefs* (ibidem, p. 357).

(b) **Perceived self-efficacy**
8 items in Italian from the array by Moè et al. (2010, pp. 90-91) were selected. This survey is a validated translation of a similar questionnaire devised by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) on student engagement and class-management. Another item was added to these, on the respondent’s overall perception of their self-efficacy (in the work environment).

(c) **Frequency of cooperative vs traditional strategies**
Drawing on studies by Buchs et al. (2017) and Ghaith (2018), some questions were adapted to the Italian context: on the content of the monitored training courses, they identified 12 teaching strategies for use in class, divided between cooperative and traditional approaches.

(d) **Difficulties experienced**
The research cited by Buchs et al. (2017, pp. 300-301) and by Waafa (2011) were the reference points for the identification of 23 items connected to this dimension, which consisted of one question, with multiple suggested replies: “*What is the biggest challenge that you face when using active methods at school?*”, and 2 arrays of questions on a 5-point Likert scale:

- “*In your experience, what level of difficulty do you encounter when introducing these activities in the classroom (on a scale from very difficult to very easy)***”. An “*I don’t know***” option was included, useful in cases where the teacher does not know a particular teaching strategy. The question was followed by 6 items.
- “*Indicate the level of difficulty you experience in... (choose from very difficult to very easy. If you do not know this method, put ‘I don’t know’)*”. 16 items followed, referring to the difficulty of implementing principles of cooperative learning and peer interaction (6), locus of authority (2), teacher as facilitator (2), alignment with the curriculum (2), planning (3) and evaluation (1) (Table 2).
(e) Training needs

Drawing on previous studies (Malusà et al., 2019), 8 possible educational methods for improving teachers’ professional skills were identified.

Data Analysis

The data analysis includes reliability, descriptive and correlation analyses between the observed variables. The statistical package SPSS v.21 was used for the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principles of CL and peer interaction</td>
<td>– giving feedback on the way in which the students work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– working directly on the social skills necessary for group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– giving each member of the class responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– establishing a sense of team responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– introducing complementary tasks in a small group (positive interdependence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– assigning roles and tasks in the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of authority</td>
<td>– allowing students to work autonomously without my direct supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– delegating some of the teaching to the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher as facilitator</td>
<td>– observing the students while they work cooperatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– managing potential discipline problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment with curriculum</td>
<td>– using the books on the curriculum to engage the students in cooperative tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– finding activities that fit into the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>– finding time to plan cooperative structures and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– finding time to introduce cooperative activities into the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– team planning cooperative learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>– assessing each student’s acquisition after group work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Results related to question 1
Although traditional teaching methods still persist, cooperative strategies are also being adopted (Figure 1); teachers organise pair work ($\mu=3.91; Mo=4.00; Ds=.76$); while activities in small structured groups are less common ($\mu=3.38; Mo=3.00; Ds=.89$): 14.7% of teachers organise them rarely; 42.2% every so often; 32.4% often and only 10.8% very often (Table 3).

### Table 3 - Instructional strategies and their total frequency (absolute) and by school stage (5-point Likert scale) (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategies</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Primary school teachers</th>
<th>Middle school Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative games</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive games</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle time</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with teacher</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jigsaw</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>seldom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual study</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in pairs</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual work</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontal lesson</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative structures</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning together</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal team</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results related to question 2**

The teachers find it easiest to introduce pair work ($\mu=3.87; Mo=4.00$), while the Jigsaw strategy is perceived as the most difficult ($\mu=2.22; Mo=2.00$) (Table 4).
Table 4 – Perceived difficulties (5-point Likert scale) (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>MEDIAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COOPERATIVE STRUCTURES</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOPERATIVE GAMES</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIRCLE TIME</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIGSAW</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING TOGETHER</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIR WORK</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>easy</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They assign roles and tasks ($\mu=3.04$) and monitor students’ work ($\mu=3.02$) without difficulty; but say (48%) it is difficult both to make time for cooperative activities in their own classrooms ($\mu=2.28$) and for working together ($\mu=1.92$) to design tasks (2.23) with positive interdependence ($\mu=2.05$) (Table 5 and 6).

Table 5 - The greater challenge (%) (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alignment with curriculum</th>
<th>Group management</th>
<th>Evaluation in CL</th>
<th>Team agreement</th>
<th>CL teacher competence</th>
<th>Planning time</th>
<th>Time to propose cooperative activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.00%</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
<td>11.80%</td>
<td>15.70%</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
<td>25.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Perceived difficulties in implementing cooperative learning activities (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>MEDIAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedback</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on social skills</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering individual responsibility</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigning roles and tasks</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering team responsibility</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing positive interdependence</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not direct supervision</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegating teaching</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>quite easy</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Managing discipline problems   2.58  quite easy   .99
Using official didactic material and books   2.62  quite easy   1.22
Planning activities that fit into the curriculum   2.81  quite easy   .91
Time to plan CL activities   2.23  difficult   .94
Time to introduce CL activities into the classroom   2.28  difficult   1.00
Team planning   1.92  difficult   1.11
Individual evaluation   2.39  difficult   .91

Differences between school stage (elementary v. middle)

At the two school stages the most frequently reported difficulties are similar: the exception being the time variable and evaluation of activities, seen as more difficult by the middle school teachers (Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The greater challenge</th>
<th>Elementary school teachers</th>
<th>Middle school teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in evaluating the cooperative activities</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompatibility with the established programme</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for lengthy preparation</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little theoretical knowledge of active methods</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little concrete experience of active methods</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little control over the relational dynamics that emerge</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little agreement with colleagues</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time for introducing cooperative activities in classroom</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results related to question 3

Post-training results indicate high levels of perceived self-efficacy, with pupil-oriented beliefs greater than subject–oriented beliefs (Fig. 2), but significantly correlated to each other (r=.502 p <0.01) (Table 8).
The correlation analysis (Table 8) clearly demonstrates the existence of a significant correlation between belief in an activity and the frequency with which that activity is carried out, confirming the results of Buchs et al. (2017) in an Italian context. In other words, the teachers who believe in co-built (student-student-teacher) learning processes say that they use cooperative games, Circle time, cooperative structures and the Learning together model more frequently with their classes. A high self-efficacy score also enables a teacher to work more frequently with the Jigsaw model, considered by teachers to be the most complex. Unsurprisingly, cooperative activities are used most rarely by those who perceive them to be difficult/very difficult.

Table 8 - Correlation between teachers’ beliefs, self-efficacy, perceptions of difficulty and frequency of educational strategies (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Subject oriented</th>
<th>Student oriented</th>
<th>Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative games</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.395**</td>
<td>.230*</td>
<td>.645**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive games</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle time</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.411**</td>
<td>.294**</td>
<td>.763**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with teacher</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.249*</td>
<td>.271**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jigsaw</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.325**</td>
<td>.752**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual study</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair work</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.607**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual work</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative structures</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.335**</td>
<td>.199*</td>
<td>.516**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontal lessons</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The question arises as to which of the aspects connected to a teacher’s perceived self-efficacy have a significant correlation with their perception of the applicability of cooperative learning methods in their classes. Table 9 shows a correlation both with aspects of managing the class group (i.e. with confidence in one’s ability to manage disruptive behaviour) and with engagement with students, in particular in item 5 (helping students to think critically) and 8 (knowing how to stimulate unmotivated students).

Table 9 – Correlation between teachers’ perceived self-efficacy and their perceptions of the applicability of cooperative learning (N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. item</th>
<th>How well do you think you can deal with the following situations?</th>
<th>CL applicability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacy: classroom management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Get students to obey classroom rules</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Control disruptive behaviour</td>
<td>.293**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacy: student engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adapt lessons to the particular needs/profile of the class</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Provide challenges for the most able students</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Help students to think critically</td>
<td>.373**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Support and help the students in greatest difficulty</td>
<td>.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Awaken and sustain students’ confidence in their own potential</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Stimulate unmotivated students</td>
<td>.325**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P< 0.01 (Two-Tailed). * P< 0.05 (Two-Tailed)**

Table 10 focuses on the different aspects already flagged by Buchs et al. (Buchs et al., 2017) as possible challenges faced by teachers endeavouring to implement Cooperative Learning strategies. The present results reveal a significant correlation between these issues and teachers’ perceived self-efficacy and confirm that a lack of time – for team planning, or the introduction of cooperative activities in class (planning), or the subsequent evaluation of these activities – is perceived to be the biggest difficulty.

Table 10 – Correlation between teachers’ perceived self-efficacy and potential challenges for implementing cooperative learning (5-point Likert scale, from 1=very difficult to 5= very easy) ((N=102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics</th>
<th>Correlation analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principles of CL and peer interaction</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results related to question 4

The teachers involved favoured discussion groups with colleagues and/or an expert, and in-class support from an expert as they experimented with cooperative learning. Online training ($\mu=2.38$), and purely theoretical training ($\mu=2.20$,) appear to be of little interest (Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11 – Question: What would help you to be able to make greater use of cooperative learning? (4-point Likert scale) (N=102)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More purely theoretical training/education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More experiential training (hands on+theory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support in the classroom from a competent/skilled colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support in the classroom from an external expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials for study and/or classroom use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual sessions/meetings with an expert (coaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic discussion group with colleagues and/or an expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussions and conclusion

From an initial reading of the results it emerges that the brief experiential training given only partially succeeded in influencing the teaching methods of the participants. One year after the training, the teachers said that they were (still) mainly using traditional methods (frontal lessons, whole class discussions with teachers, pupils studying/working alone), and just complementing these with certain interactive activities. Most popular – routinely (often or very often) organised by more than 80% of respondents – is pair work, while over 40% said that they used small structured groups; the more complex cooperative activities (*Jigsaw*, for example) were only occasionally explored, in the primary schools *Circle Time* and *cooperative games* were also more frequently introduced: the latter are often or very often used by half of the primary teachers vs 16.7% of middle school teachers.
The (relative) optimism of the first descriptive results can be partially explained as follows. Above all, because of the experiential method at the heart of the training offered by Scintille.it, a private organisation which has, over time, developed a learning path (Matini & Pavan, 2015) which is very popular among participants, for just these elements – workshops/labs and direct involvement in role-play (Malusà et al., 2019). However, at the end of the course, the middle school teachers were less confident than their primary colleagues about the transferability of the teaching methods proposed. Almost 40% of participants, moreover, has already done some training in cooperative learning. And, too, the teachers who attended the course had chosen to do so, reporting a high level of prior interest (µ=9.15 on a 10-point Likert scale) on the satisfaction survey. And Italian teacher training (whether during the initial training or during in-service sessions) rarely integrates such approaches – paradoxically, active methodologies are often taught to teachers using traditional teaching methods!

Even granted the above factors, the implementation of cooperative activities in class, however, is still difficult. The analysis reveals that the teachers in the sample have experienced many challenges, at a variety of interconnected levels (Doise, 1982).

a) The intrapersonal level

Teachers’ beliefs and their perceived self-efficacy demonstrate a significant correlation with the sort of teaching methods that they use in class, confirming previous results (Buchs et al., 2017) on the role of student oriented beliefs.

Furthermore, the teachers who reveal a high level of self-efficacy say that they use cooperative methodologies more frequently: these methods require that a teacher be able to manage a group, and anticipate disruptive behaviour. Indeed, monitoring, an essential part of this methodology (D. W. Johnson et al., 1994), puts the teacher in the role of permanent “participant observer” in the class group which – taught to assume an active role through the progressive development of distributed leadership – becomes a crucial resource not only in conflict situations but also in groups with a range of different learning levels, more generally. The efficacy in relation to student engagement or the knowing how to challenge the most able students cognitively, while simultaneously including and supporting the weaker members of the class, presupposes a capacity to use socio-cognitive conflict (Butera, Sommet, & Darnon, 2019) as a learning tool in an inclusive, non-competitive climate in which process is more important than product (i.e.

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25 Logistic regression models, even though the explained variance is limited (R²=.085), show that the teachers perceived the primary school environment to be one of the key predictors of didactic applicability (Malusà et al., 2019, p. 20).
than results), although results are still expected. And the – highly heterogeneous – multicultural classes in Italian schools today can only be managed by teachers who possess these skills.

The teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy say that they also use the more complicated cooperative structures (Leaning Together and Jigsaw), managing to introduce the fundamental elements of cooperative learning (interdependence, peer interaction) into the activities they implement and to situate themselves effectively as facilitators of a learning process that is co-built with the students (student-oriented belief). The results, however, reveal a significant correlation between subject- and student-oriented beliefs, often both present in the same teacher, who finds her/himself having to justify (to themselves more than anyone else) the values of some didactic choices, at times not shared by their colleagues (Assen, Meijers, Zwaal, & Poell, 2019).

b) The interpersonal level

Insufficient time was, according to the teachers in the sample, the greatest challenge that they faced (or was this an excuse?). There is not enough time – either to plan cooperative activities in collaboration with fellow teachers (team planning), or to introduce them into the classroom, according to Buchs et al. (2017). These factors suggest both a deep-seated methodological insecurity and problems in evaluating the cooperative activities that are implemented, above all in middle schools, despite the fact that in Italian school “planning and evaluation for skills” (D.Lgs. 62/17 and DM 183/19) are provided for (MIUR, 2012, 2019).

c) The organisational level

The rigidity of (particularly middle) school organisation is another underlying issue in observed process. Italian primary schools have been recognised – by various scholars (Capperucci & Piccioli, 2015) in recent decades – as unfortunately becoming more and more like middle, or even high, schools (a sort of “secondarization”) (Besozzi, 2014, p. 200). The flexible organisation and relational approach of the primary school shifting towards the more strict, impersonal structure of the higher levels, with overly fragmented weekly time tables and up to 7 or 8 “specialized” teachers, who do not share teaching one class with consistent educational “micro-contracts” (Carugati & Selleri, 2001). The planning of a cooperative activity, attentive to and respectful of the rhythms of the children, undoubtedly requires more than the 50 minutes typically allotted to each lesson in Italian schools: experiential learning that includes a metacognition phase can only take place within flexible time and space frameworks that encourage transversal skills.
The lack of time to plan together and share strategies that the teachers have highlighted is becoming an ever greater problem, as teaching teams get bigger and bigger, and the “bureaucratization” of schools continues apace (Spector, 2018).

Periodic discussion groups with colleagues and/or an expert to discuss and try to resolve problems appears to be a training method that would suit the teachers’ need for simple, easily organised, cooperative strategies (Ferguson-Patrick & Jolliffe, 2018).

In conclusion, the teachers say that the main challenges they experience regard (intra/inter)personal relations, planning/design issues and organisational rigidity; in the light of these findings, it would appear appropriate to extend the training courses to include simple cooperative structures that teachers can use in the short-term. Above all, however, the urgency of organising more flexible timetabling, which accommodates the nature of particular tasks/activities, is highlighted. Only thus can learning experiences that feel coherent, and involve active interdisciplinary modalities that help to develop students’ social and transversal skills, be designed.

In their educational mission, schools are called upon to innovate, to find what Steven Johnson (2010) called “the adjacent possible”. There are no easy answers to the problems that arise in the complex educational and organisational dynamics of today’s schools. Analysing the large body of educational research on the challenges faced by teachers implementing innovative methodologies, Baloche and Brody point to the importance of

- examining beliefs; identifying problems; utilising research as a foundation for innovation;
- understanding context and thinking incrementally; building communities for inquiry, experimentation, and support; being willing to fail; and recognising when something does not work (Baloche & Brody, 2017, p. 281),

while reminding us, above all, of the “commitment to cooperation, access, and equity” that underpins all of the above (ibidem), dimensions which recall the educational mission of an effective teacher (Korthagen, 2004), the inner core of an “onion model”, in the layers of which, moving from inside out, are found first identity, then beliefs, then competences and, finally, behaviour, that can be directly observed by others.

While teacher training still focuses primarily on methodologies, without including an experiential path that explores the deeper levels of the beliefs, or better still, the values and the educational mission (Malusà, 2019b; Tarozzi, 2014), the innovative impact will be limited and short-term.
Notes

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References


David Duran & Jesús Ribosa. Learning by teaching: How can students learn by teaching their peers

Abstract

Evidence-based education suggests that we have to turn classrooms into communities of learners, where students not only learn from the teacher, but also from the mutual help they offer each other. Peer learning, either via cooperative learning or peer tutoring, is thus necessary. However, one of the barriers in the use of these methodologies has to do with the unshakable conception that peer learning benefits the student who receives help, whereas the student who offers help loses learning opportunities. In this paper, we are going to go through the evidences of the possibility of learning by teaching, as well as its limitations. Moreover, we are going to show and discuss some practical implications based on this principle.

Keywords: learning by teaching; peer learning; peer tutoring; cooperative learning

Resum

L’educació basada en evidències suggereix que hem de convertir les aules en comunitats d’aprenents, on els estudiants no només aprenguin del docent, sinó també de l’ajuda mútua que s’ofereixen entre ells. Per tant, l’aprenentatge entre iguals és necessari, ja sigui mitjançant l’aprenentatge cooperatiu o la tutoria entre iguals. Tanmateix, una de les barreres en l’ús d’aquestes metodologies té a veure amb la concepció ferma que l’aprenentatge entre iguals beneficia l’alumne que rep ajuda, mentre que l’alumne que ofereix ajuda perd oportunitats d’aprenentatge. En aquest article analitzarem les evidències de la possibilitat d’aprendre ensenyant, així com les seves limitacions. A més, exposarem i debatrem algunes implicacions pràctiques basades en aquest principi.

Paraules clau: aprendre ensenyant; aprenentatge entre iguals; tutoria entre iguals; aprenentatge cooperatiu

Resumen

La educación basada en evidencias sugiere que debemos convertir las aulas en comunidades de aprendices, donde los estudiantes no sólo aprendan del docente, sino también de la ayuda mutua que se ofrecen entre ellos. Por lo tanto, el aprendizaje entre iguales es necesario, ya sea mediante el aprendizaje cooperativo o la tutoría entre iguales. Sin embargo, una de las barreras en el uso de estas metodologías tiene que ver con la concepción firme de que el aprendizaje entre iguales beneficia al alumno que recibe ayuda, mientras que el alumno que ofrece ayuda pierde oportunidades de aprendizaje. En este artículo analizaremos las evidencias de la posibilidad de aprender enseñando, así como sus limitaciones. Además, expondremos y debatiremos algunas implicaciones prácticas basadas en este principio.

Palabras clave: aprender enseñando; aprendizaje entre iguales; tutoría entre iguales; aprendizaje cooperativo
Introduction

The widespread use of cooperative learning all over the world from preschool to university, backed up by plenty of research evidence, is one of the success stories of social and educational psychology (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). However, there are barriers that should be considered and further explored to promote the sustainable implementation of cooperative learning (Sharan, 2010). From our experience, one of the barriers has to do with the unshakable conception that peer learning benefits the student who receives help, whereas the student who offers help ‘loses’ learning opportunities. In this paper, we are going to go through the evidence of the possibility of learning by teaching, as well as its limitations.

Can we learn by teaching?

If you have ever traveled by plane, you will certainly be aware of the safety instructions given by the crew before the plane takes off. This is without doubt key information for our survival in case of emergency during the flight. But are you confident about your knowledge of these safety instructions to put them into practice if you need to? Imagine an alternative situation, different to having the crew members giving the explanation. When you come into the plane, they let you know that you have been selected to carry out the safety demonstration before the plane takes off. You have some minutes to get through the safety instructions and objects for the demonstration, and then it is time for your performance in front of the other passengers. Would you learn the safety instructions better in this situation?

This example suggests that we can learn by teaching others. Throughout history, great thinkers have claimed that teaching is a good way to learn. “Teaching is learning”, Seneca said. “To teach is to learn twice”, Joubert claimed. “For me, there is no separation between teaching and learning, because when you teach you also learn”, Pau Casals stated. “Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning”, Freire declared. Of course, these quotations are not evidence. They presumably come from personal experience, and they are probably related to certain ways of teaching these thinkers experienced. But we might possibly find some personal experiences to support these statements. Have you learnt by teaching your students?

Based on the experiences from several teachers, Duran and Topping (2017) identified three types of reasons teachers give to explain their learning by teaching their students: a) learning through exercising the profession, that is, the opportunities for improving the teaching
competence offered by the practice of teaching; b) learning to teach, that is, the opportunities for learning about the content they had to teach their students about; and c) learning while teaching, that is, the opportunities for learning during the class while they are involved in the joint knowledge-building process with their students and the community. Although the experience of learning by teaching is familiar to teachers somehow or other, some teachers also report experiences of unlearning by teaching, that is, making the content simpler and more schematic. All these experiences reported by teachers seem to point in the same direction than research: teaching does not always offer learning opportunities to those who teach.

Empirical evidence: Potentialities and limitations

First evidence from the learning-by-teaching potential comes from peer tutoring. In these peer tutoring practices, more competent students were asked to join less competent students to help them learn. It was expected that less competent students, in the role of tutees, would obtain learning benefits from this practice. However, students in the role of tutors were not expected to learn, and that is why they were usually rewarded with credits or money. Since both tutees and tutors were students, their learning was measured. Surprisingly, research showed that tutors learned as much or more than tutees (Allen, 1976; Cloward, 1967; Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Goodlad & Hist, 1989). This trend has been reported by studies until today. But why do tutors learn? What explains learning by teaching?

A first attempt comes from the famous so-called learning pyramid with different activities and percentages has been widely widespread showing teaching others as the most powerful activity for learning. However, this pyramid, attributed to the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, is fake. Probably, it has been widely accepted because it backs up our personal experiences, but it is not based on empirical evidence. If we want to know the potentialities and limitations of learning by teaching, we need to build an explanatory framework that integrates empirical evidence of the different elements involved in the teaching activity.

Based on these different elements involved in the teaching activity reported by research, Duran (2017) poses four levels, from less to more complexity and bidirectionality and, thus, from less to more learning-by-teaching potential: learning to teach, learning and presenting, learning and explaining, and learning and explaining using questions (Fig. 1). There is evidence showing that when we learn a content to teach it to others –expectancy– we learn it better than when we learn it for ourselves. This situation is used by peer learning, when asking students to learn something so that they can later teach it to classmates. Moreover, if students have the
opportunity to present the content in front of their peers—for instance, giving an oral presentation before the class—, they will learn the content better, even when the audience is passive. But if the audience—for instance, students’ teammates—is considered in the sense that the student who is teaching adjusts the explanation—transforming knowledge—the possibilities of learning by teaching increase. As pointed out by Roscoe and Chi (2007), if the student tutor only delivers information—knowledge-telling actions—the learning-by-teaching opportunities are limited. This distinction between knowledge-telling and knowledge-building sets a clear boundary for learning by teaching. Finally, if students are also given the opportunity to formulate and answer complex questions—especially those questions to which students do not know the answers—the possibilities of learning by teaching are even better.

Figure 1. Diagram showing the four levels of learning by teaching.

At the beginning of this paper, we imagined a situation on a plane where you were responsible for presenting the safety measures to the other passengers. A question was posed: would you learn the safety instructions better in this situation? After going through the four learning-by-teaching levels, we might affirm that it depends on the activities involved during the presentation of the safety measures. Would you just deliver the information without transforming it for your audience? Would you be able to exchange questions and answers with
the other passengers? The learning potentialities and limitations arising from the different levels should be considered if we want to make the most of learning by teaching.

**Educational implications**

The explanatory framework presented above suggests several educational implications both for students and teachers. In peer learning situations, not only students receiving help from their peers can learn. Students offering help can learn as well. This does not only happen in peer tutoring, but also in other practices that more or less explicitly have this component. Of course, in most of the cooperative learning methods there are situations in which students teach their peers—and learn themselves by teaching. Jigsaw—when each student teaches his/her piece of the puzzle to peers—or group investigation—when groups present their work to the rest of the class—are good examples. Other situations could include, for instance, students learning by developing educational materials, that is, by creating artifacts that other people could use to learn something, which would offer learning opportunities for themselves. Peer assessment can offer learning opportunities for students as well, giving them the chance to review, evaluate and give feedback to their classmates. Students can also learn by replacing the teacher in front of a group, for example letting them present something to the class. Or students can even learn by co-teaching with their teachers, that is, by jointly planning, implementing and assessing activities for the whole group. Considering the potentialities and limitations of learning by teaching, carefully planning all these class situations is needed to make the most of the learning opportunities that each situation might potentially offer.

**Conclusions**

We know a lot about how students learn, receiving help from peers, but less about the implications of learning by teaching. The explanatory framework presented in this paper tries to shed light on the potentialities and limitations of learning by teaching. The monopoly of knowledge was taken away from teachers some years ago, especially when Internet became widely widespread. Teaching seemed to be the last monopoly teachers kept until today, but things might have started to change. Are we willing to share the teaching capacity with our students? Learning to learn emerged as an important concept to highlight the need of helping students regulate their own learning processes. Learning by teaching might soon emerge as a relevant topic to remark that a fairer society requires that we all can teach and learn with other people, so that knowledge becomes truly democratized.
Notes

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References


Paola Giorgis, Isabella Pescarmona, Federica Setti  Who is ‘the Other’? A Cooperative Intercultural Experience

Abstract

Our workshop involved participants in a critical analysis of discourses and images on issues such as culture and identity, and how, in the public debate, they contribute to the (re)production of ‘Otherness’. We presented several examples from different sources, including literature and the visual arts. Through Cooperative Learning activities, participants engaged in the discussion of the categories used to define the Other in order to deconstruct prejudices, to develop intercultural competence and to co-construct an intercultural discourse.

Keywords: Otherness; Cooperative Learning; Intercultural Education

1. Who is ‘the Other’?

The issue of the ‘Other’ has been studied by many different disciplines and from many different perspectives – anthropology, psychology, critical studies, intercultural studies, are just a few. For example, a definition from Intercultural Studies states that: “being essentially about social relationships, Otherness depends on context, situational position and time”. Being relational, no conceptualization of the 'Other' (‘Them’) is possible without a conceptualization of ’Same and Self ‘(‘Us’), (Praxmarer 2014-2016).

Yet, the point is who can decide and from which position who is ‘us’ (the in-group) and who is ‘them’ (the out-group). Therefore, the focus is who has the power to define the ‘Other’ as such, from which position, under which conditions, on which grounds, for which purposes.

Our workshop thus followed two main paths:

a) the construction, the (re)production, the dissemination of narratives and discourses about the ‘Other’, that is what has been defined as ‘Othering’: “treating people from another group as essentially different from and generally inferior to the group you belong to” (MacMillan Dictionary);
b) how such constructions, (re)productions and disseminations can be creatively and critically problematized in order to challenge the reification, the stigmatization, the stereotyping or the folklorization of the Other.

Operationally, we addressed this issue from a creative and critical perspective. We believe that ‘creative’ and ‘critical’ go together as they are both able to offer a different perspective on things. The perspective is what frames and defines our vision of reality and the meaning we give to it. Therefore, changing or subverting the perspective or the viewpoint from which we look at things and at yourself is a good exercise to approach Otherness by apprehending what is around us or ourselves as ‘others’ (Giorgis, 2018). Such exercise defines the intercultural and the critical approach, since there must be some actual dissociation from one’s available explanatory texts, discourses, representations and interpretations. Luke states that “for the critical to happen, there must be some actual dissociation from one’s available explanatory texts and discourses – a denaturalization and discomfort and ‘making the familiar strange’” (2004, pp. 26-27): in other words, ‘critical’ requires “an analytic move to self-position oneself as Other” (ibid).

2. Cooperative Learning and the ‘Otherness’

Our methodological approach is combined with the practical experience of embodying the co-construction and the co-conduction of the workshop. We believe that Cooperative Learning (CL) may achieve the deep purpose of Intercultural Education, such as enhancing differences as resources and promoting equal participation in the learning and teaching process. CL fosters the interdependence of different intellectual abilities, personal experiences and cognitive styles, and values the contribution of everyone in order to create a shared knowledge. This leads to construct a democratic environment, where different perspectives have voice and challenge the usual way of thinking and acting. In this way, CL is not only a means of promoting social skills for living in peace with others, but also an opportunity of investigating reality and problematizing everyday diversity (Pescarmona, 2017; Gobbo, 1999). Thus, presenters and participants were involved in constructing an open and trusting relationship and discussed their own beliefs and expectations towards the Other and the Self.

2.1 Co-constructing a proposal
Since we are a collective and we create our research outcomes, texts and interpretations cooperatively, co-construction is at the base of our methodological approach. In this sense CL fits functionally with our purposes because we believe that exchange, dialogue, co-construction of knowledge and positive interdependence are essential to explain the multifaceted complexity of reality in our texts, interpretations and workshops.

Indeed our project, wom.an.ed (women’s studies in anthropology and education) aims to develop and promote the intercultural communication and mediation, the CL and the anthropological approaches in schools, social services, vocational education and training (VET), health care institutions and private social groups, such as charities, NGOs, etc. We are researchers, teachers, and practitioners with many years of professional experience in the field of education and training. Our professional profiles, as well as our theoretical and practical competences are various, yet we share a common academic formation and expertise in the fields of CL, intercultural education, anthropology and ethnography of education.

2.2 Implementing a cooperative and intercultural discussion in heterogeneous groups

The workshop activities aimed to explore the question “Who is the Other?” and under which terms each of us is ‘Other’ to someone else by problematizing the usual categories that we use to define the Other and the Self. This issue was addressed by engaging the group in a cooperative experience in three steps:

a) an initial ice-breaking activity;

b) cooperative working groups;

c) a final discussion and construction of a collective discourse.

At first, the participants were asked to think about their previous ideas on ‘Otherness’, by answering the questions: When did you perceive yourself as ‘Other’? How did you feel? What was your reaction? They were encouraged to express their experience, beliefs and feelings through the cooperative structure ‘Think-Pair-Share’. Thus, they started thinking individually, and writing down their own ideas; then, they discussed and shared these in pairs. The main ideas were reported as keywords or short sentences on post-its, which were shared and discussed in the whole group.
This activity aims to develop critical reflection. For instance, during the workshop participants discussed their multiple identities, such as “religion”, “nationality”, “age”, “gender”, “profession”, “social status”, “interests and hobbies”, and “educational level”. They also expressed the difficulties in defining the Other and the Self, when they perceived they “lack the knowledge about the Others”, “feel different”, “do not look like (or speak as) the majority” or when they “do not align with what they are supposed to do”.

Following the discussion, in small cooperative groups participants debated “Who is the Other?” by using materials from different subjects, such as Visual Arts, Geography, Literature, Educational and Ethnographic Studies. They were asked to work in groups consisting of four members; each had to play a cooperative role (time keeper; resource manager; facilitator; reporter). The groups were mixed according to nationality and professional biography – teachers, educators, researchers, students, teacher trainers, etc. Each group received one set of activity cards including geographical maps (A), selections from literature and from the visual arts (B), some suggestions from ethnography of education (C). The task consisted of looking at the pictures and information given, and exploring them within the group sharing views and opinions in order to co-construct an intercultural discourse on Otherness. The leading questions were: Who is the ‘Other’? In which ways may the ‘Other’ be represented?

2.3 An example of an Activity card

During our workshop, we offered several examples of how even the smallest shift or reverse of perspective changes our perceptions, conceptualizations and interpretations. For reasons of brevity, we present here only one example.

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Participants were invited to discuss how many changes of perspective are exhibited in the two paintings, and how such changes impact on our apprehension and interpretation of the images – e.g., change of configuration, of ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Kehinde Wiley is a North American painter who reproduces great masterpieces of the past by substituting the original figures in the portraits with black people whom he street-casts. Wiley’s juxtaposition makes visible and explicit the representation of power; by turning the ‘familiar’ into ‘unfamiliar’ he reverses the perspective of the visual representation, obliging the viewer to reconsider interpretations taken-for-granted – what is a portrait for, for whom, to communicate what; who has the prerogative to be in a portrait, etc.

2.4  An Open Manifesto: A Collective Deconstruction of Otherness

Finally, based on the discussion, participants were asked to create a slogan that expressed their feelings, ideas, and problematization of the question “Who is the Other?”. The slogan of each group contributed to the construction of a new cooperative and critical perspective on ‘Otherness’.
Such Open Manifesto leads to deconstruct prejudices and nurtures an intercultural competence by unveiling hidden narratives of what we define as the ‘Other’ and the ‘Self’.

For example, following is the Manifesto we created during the workshop:

* From: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:17th-century_unknown_painters_-Portrait_of_a_Couple-_WGA23678.jpg
* From: https://kehindewiley.com/
3. A useful interpretative key to deconstruct the ‘Otherness’.

Among the materials we proposed, we chose to introduce the concept of *propriospect* since it is very useful for the deconstruction of ‘Otherness’. Goodenough explained his use of the term in the following way:

Out of his own experience each individual develops his private, subjective view of the world and of its contents - his personal outlook. It embraces both his cognitive and his affective orderings of his experience. [...] Included in a person’s propriospect and, indeed, largely dominating its content are the various standards for perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing that he attributes to other persons as a result of his experience of their actions and admonitions. [...] A person may not only attribute different systems of standards to different sets of others, he may also be competent in more than one of them - be competent, that is, in more than one culture (Goodenough, 1981, pp. 98–99).

Therefore, we asked participants to try to answer these questions: *What does this concept add to the reflections and definitions that arose in my discussions with the previous materials? Have I changed my initial perspective? In how many ways is the ‘Other’ a part of me, too?*

The questions above developed a discussion on how “every individual acquires competences in myriads of micro-cultures and in their subcultural variants” (Wolcott, 2004, p. 222) as every person develops a different *propriospect* through which she/he interprets the surrounding world. Furthermore, everyone re-elaborates differently cultural experience and
reproduces macro- and micro-cultures in ways that are always different from everyone else, at least in some aspects (Setti 2017).

**Notes**

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About the workshop:
It was designed and conducted by wom.an.ed (women’s studies in anthropology and education – [www.womaned.org](http://www.womaned.org)). This paper, fully shared by the three of us, was drawn up as follows: part 1 and part 2.3 by Paola Giorgis; part 2, part 2.2 and part 2.4 by Isabella Pescarmona; part 2.1 and part 3 by Federica Setti.

**References and suggestions for further readings**


Abstract

Why is Cooperative Learning (CL) an inclusive approach to education? What are the psychological mechanisms that can explain its efficacy? Starting from personal experiences and reflections, we will analyse how important CL is in terms of satisfaction of personal needs and powerful instrument to promote non-competitive interactions. We will use a Transactional Analysis point of view. This psychodynamic approach to personality and social interactions can give useful hints to understand why “the most desirable and beneficial form of interaction is a cooperative, non-violent, nurturing relationship” (Steiner, 1974).

Keywords: cooperative learning, transactional analysis, inclusion

Introduction

The general aim of the workshop was to deepen the relationship among school inclusion, cooperative learning methodology and students’ personal needs.

Specific goals were:

- Favour reflection on inclusion, personal needs and cooperation in the classroom
- Experience cooperative learning methodology to promote inclusion and wellbeing
- Learn a little about Transactional Analysis and cooperation.

A specific psychodynamic approach, Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1972), was used to show the important repercussions that the intentional use of cooperative work/study groups has on the person from a psychological point of view.

The what and who of school Inclusion

Inclusion is the process of change and improvement within schools so that all students can be treated with respect, provided with real learning opportunities and valued equally, especially those with special needs. Inclusion processes concern mainly specific targets:

- learners with special educational needs and disabilities
- traveller students
- economically and socially disadvantaged students
• minority linguistic and ethnic groups.

Moreover, it is about the way a school community supports and addresses the **individual needs** of each student so that he/she can learn and grow, acquiring academic and general knowledge and skills.

School inclusion is a means to get to social inclusion, and it is so important to human society to be included in the plan called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (2015). The SDGs, set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by the year 2030, are part of the 2030 Agenda.

The 4th Objective, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” reminds us how much there is still to do and offers 7 subgoals as a clear direction toward equity of opportunity (UN Resolution 70/1, 2015).

Talking about inclusion has usually to do mainly with what school and society can do to secure that a person is treated fairly. In Italy, school inclusion always implies that the student has a right to be with his fellows in the same classroom, even if with the support of a trained dedicated teacher. Students with disabilities are placed in classes with other students of about the same age, not the same developmental level.

It has to do with trying to give each student the best possible placement in the classroom, and the role of disciplinary teachers and support teachers are central, in order to promote successful experiences for the students with special needs and for the rest of the classroom too. But, in a way, inclusion involves **any of the students**, not just people with special needs. We are all original and unique and we all share basic needs notwithstanding our many differences.

The relationships between teachers and student, and among students, are central to the inclusion process at the more personal level. Transactional Analysis can give some useful hints about it.

**Individual needs from a TA perspective**

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a psychodynamic approach developed in the ’50s by psychiatrist Eric Berne (1972; 1964). As a theory of personality, it explains how people are structured psychologically (Ego states: Parent-Adult-Child), how they function and express their personality through behaviour.
TA is a model of communication that analyses individual and group transactions in order to get how the internal processes of individuals, systems and organizations operate and give solutions to dysfunctional group dynamics.

TA is also a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth that focuses on the study of repetitive patterns of behaviour.

Some of its constructs are proposed to reflect on school inclusion.

**Motivation, hungers and strokes**

TA is a theory of individual motivation, according to which every person has three basic needs, so strong that Berne calls them **hungers**:

- The first one is strictly biological: people need **emotional and sensory stimulation** to remain biologically healthy. If they are deprived of this, there is deterioration in the individual's psychological and biological health, enough to cause death.

- As an individual matures, this stimulus hunger becomes more specific in so far as the individual will develop a **need for social recognition**, for example, as a way of differentiating the individual’s own qualities from those of others based on social feedback. This is known as recognition hunger. The unit of social action that counts in order to satisfy this recognition hunger is known as a **stroke**.

- Then there is **structure hunger**. Eric Berne’s 1972 book on life scripts asked the question “What do we do after we say hello?”. Understanding how we choose to structure our time asks fundamental questions about who we are and how we relate to others in order to get the strokes we need.

- Berne observed that people need strokes, the units of interpersonal recognition, to survive and thrive:
  - **Positive Strokes**- Any form of recognition, verbal or non-verbal, which we experience as pleasant.
  - **Negative Strokes** - Any recognition we experience as painful or unpleasant, can be verbal or non-verbal.

Understanding how people give and receive positive and negative strokes and changing unhealthy patterns of stroking are powerful aspects of work in transactional analysis.

Working on school inclusion from a TA perspective means taking care of the specific individual needs of each student and planning learning experiences that can satisfy those needs.
Okness and life positions

Stewart and Joines (2012) defined the degree of OKness a person feels as the "essential value" that one perceives in oneself and others:

- a person’s basic beliefs about self and others, which are used to justify decisions and behaviour;
- a fundamental stance which a person takes up about the essential value he or she perceives in self and others.

There are four life positions:

- **I’m OK, you’re OK.** This is a healthy position, where the person feels good about themselves and others, seeks to collaborate and finds it comfortable to behave assertively.
- **I’m not OK, you’re OK.** This is a depressive position where the person feels one down on others and tends to behave passively.
- **I’m OK, you’re not OK.** This is a defensive position where the person feels one up on others but behaves aggressively, competitively or insensitively to justify their stance.
- **I’m not OK, you’re not OK.** This is a futile position where the person considers that neither themselves nor others are any good and often feels hopeless and helpless.

For TA, working on inclusion means protecting each student from assuming a not-ok position, either towards him/herself and toward its companions. A good way, for example, consists in building individual and group tasks that lead to success, and stimulating awareness about individual and group strengths, and tolerance for individual and group weaknesses.

In order to understand individual inclusion in groups, during the workshop a Kagan variation of a cooperative learning technique called “blackboard share” was used. Everyone took one or more post-it notes and, in silence, and completed the sentence “I feel included in a group when….” When someone finished, put the notes on the board that were later discussed. Some answers were:

- I can express what I wish and I feel understood
- I can actively participate/I have the space to speak/I can express myself openly/I share my opinions, values, thought, demands feely
- Other people share my sense of humor
- I feel secure
• I feel visible
• I show respect
• All participants know/are introduced to each other and share something/I reach a higher level of personal connections with my mates
• Other people listen to me (7 similar answers)
• My contributions are valued/My voice is represented
• I receive support and help if I need it
• Outcomes are not uniformed/Differences are calibrated
• My family issues are taken into account
• Others feel included too/We all give voice to the group/I can use “we”

Through this brief experience, participants could focus on their own sense of feeling included, and at the same time they directly experienced how a simple cooperative technique could facilitate sharing thoughts and emotions, promoting feelings of connection and openness with others.

The answers can be easily traced back to the TA concepts of the hungers, especially the need for social recognition and the yearning for an healthy life position of “I am ok, you are ok”. It seems that from the person’s point of view, satisfactory inclusion means fulfilling the need to establish and maintain satisfactory interactions with other people.

From the perspective of transactional analyst psychiatrist Claude Steiner (1974), the natural way of relating to the world is cooperative, because it allows us to start and maintain satisfactory mutual aid relationships for all parties involved, in which everyone considers himself and is considered to be person of value regardless of the specific moment of need in which he finds himself.

None the less, we often experience two different kinds of interaction:

• **Cooperative interaction** is based on the assumption that everyone is OK and has equal rights and that it is not considered acceptable to coerce others at any level.

• **Competitive, adversarial interaction.** instead, is based on the assumption that it is acceptable to coerce others into giving up their rights and to undermine their power. Power plays are interactions to coerce others.

If not educated, we very often choose competitive ones. The problem is that a cooperative relationship, on an equal footing, healthy because it is nourishing on a psychological level, requires emotional and personal skills that are rarely found naturally. Rather, the education we
receive soon teaches us that the way of being in relationship with ourselves and with the world is that in which subordination is indispensable, that in which we do it alone or compete, the one in which we have power. or we don't have it (Steiner, 2009).

Education and cooperative school experience can really make a difference. The cooperative learning context provides a natural stimulation for giving and receiving respect, which is manifested through attention to a person’s individual characteristics and needs.

**What is Cooperative learning**

“Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals. Within cooperative situations, individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other group members. Cooperative learning is the *instructional use of small groups* so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning”.27

There is a big amount of research on Cooperative Learning that shows how this methodology helps people to get along better, to be more effective, to secure inclusion (Eisenberg, 2018; Fernandez-Rio, J., et al., 2017; Kyndta et al., 2013; Puzio & Colby, 2013).

In order to have cooperative learning work well, some variables are needed:

- **Positive interdependence**

Positive interdependence exists when group members perceive that they are linked with each other in a way that one cannot succeed unless everyone succeeds. If one fails, all fail. When a positive correlation exists among individuals’ goals attainments, a group goal results.

- **Group goals** are the source of interdependence, they provide unity, a common fate, and result in higher performance and cooperation.

  Studies demonstrate that individuals do focus on joint outcomes rather than individual ones when they are placed in situations that require cooperation (Johnson and Johnson, 2014).

- **Resource Interdependence**: By limiting the resources available to each student, we create interdependence. A contribution from each is necessary; no one can do the task alone. In that situation, students will feel they are on the same side and will cooperate (Kagan, 2011)28.

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27Johnson, D.W. and Johnson, R.T., An Overview Of Cooperative Learning (http://www.co-operation.org/what-is-cooperative-learning/)

• **Task Interdependence**: We can create positive interdependence by giving students a multi-faceted task to complete, a task that demands contributions from each. For example, we can assign students a team presentation. To create interdependence, we might have each student present different parts of the presentation or assign each student a different role in the presentation (Kagan, 2011).

In a cooperative group power is distributed among members, in such a way that everyone has a role, specific responsibilities in order to reach the common goal. Everyone is necessary for the group to succeed, with respect to individual characteristics. Positive interdependence seems to be an important key to personal inclusion in a group. The cooperative goal structure makes it possible to feel that one’s personal contribution to work is important, and that everyone is needed in order to be successful as a group.

**b) Individual and group accountability**

Group accountability has to do with not being alone, not having the whole responsibility of what happens, but sharing it in structured ways.

The group is responsible for achieving its goals, and each group member must be responsible for contributing to the work towards the group goal. Nobody can lean on others without doing their part.

Being responsible in the group involves doing what the teacher asks, actively contributing and also helping others in your group. There is individual responsibility when everyone contributes their resources.

This gives the opportunity to the students to feel empowered and visible, important as the team members are, and this has to do with the basic need of social recognition.

**c) Promotive (face to face) interaction**

Promotive interaction is characterized by behaviors of encouragement, facilitation and mutual support for learning that allow everyone to complete the task and to feel less anxious and stressed.

It arises from the structuring of positive interdependence, which influences the way in which individuals interact with each other. Promotive interaction facilitates, for example, the satisfaction of sensory stimulation, as it requires constant conversation, exchange, exchange information and support.

**d) Use of social skills**
Interpersonal and small group skills are necessary to effective teamwork. Group members must know how to provide effective leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management. In cooperative learning, skills are taught with systematic procedures (Johnson & Johnson, 1989-90), or with the use on the so-called cooperative structures of Spencer Kagan (2017), that influence individual behaviour towards a more cooperative attitude.

e) Group processing

Reflection on actions related to cooperative work is an important element for the development of social skills and more. Collaborating helps each one in the group to notice the good things the other members do, as well as the good things they do. Group discussion about groupwork offers everyone the opportunity to give and receive feedback, to receive positive and negative strokes (in TA terms), in a useful way, as concrete behavior indicators and not criticisms about the person characteristics.

Why cooperative learning is an inclusive method

Being in a classroom does not secure social inclusion to any of the students. Teacher attention is necessary as much as a clear vision of what is important in order to sustain individual learning and wellbeing.

Focusing on wellbeing means carefully working on the social climate and the interpersonal relationships among students. Cooperative learning can facilitate the teachers’ task to social inclusion in each classroom because it has the potential favour healthy relations and the satisfaction of individual psychological needs.

Through the deliberate use of the many cooperative learning techniques teachers can create a protective environment where a “I am OK/You are OK” relational position is possible.

It does not change existential life positions in the short term, but it may cause them to be challenged (White, 1994).

Through class and group building activities (Kagan, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989-90) students get to know each other more deeply and overcome prejudices and stereotypes that are related to exclusion processes (Hutchison et. Al., 2007).

Through the deliberate teaching of social skills (Kagan, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 1989-90), teachers can promote healthy social transactions where anyone is in an OK position.

On the other hand, focusing on the promotion of successful individual and group learning means choosing from a vast variety of teaching and learning techniques the ones that guarantee good results.
Through cooperative activities focused on learning, like Learning together (JJ), Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992) teachers can support each student’s learning and at the same time train them in social skills, thus promoting inclusion.

Positive interdependence and the other cooperative variables (individual accountability, promotive interaction, use of social skills, monitoring) promote positive life positions and hunger satisfaction: in a cooperative context there is no need to compete with others, to devaluate and beat someone, to leave him alone in case of need. You can grow, learn, have what you need together with others. You feel empowered by the learning experience.

Cooperative learning’s attention to the effective use of social skills, promotes positive feelings and emotions like being free to be near, to accept and show affect, warmth, tenderness and closeness to others – intimacy, which is one indicator of psychological health (James e Jongeward, 1980).

As Claude Steiner (1974) stated: “The most desirable and beneficial form of interaction is a cooperative, non-violent, nurturing relationship”.

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Giovanna Malusà. Playing as you learn. Facilitating an inclusive climate through the Findhorn games

ABSTRACT

Creating an inclusive and trusting climate in multicultural and conflicted classrooms is an essential prerequisite for cooperative activities and the development of students’ social and emotional skills, in a climate free of judgement and prejudice.

Based on the Experiential Learning Model of the Findhorn Foundation (learning by doing), in this paper I will present the key elements of a variety of games for different purposes, and cooperative games in particular, discussing their possible implementation in multicultural educational contexts to build trust in both new and established groups.

Keywords: cooperative games; trust; inclusion; multicultural contexts; experiential learning model; teacher education

Introduction

Learning to live together in the understanding that difference is a resource and opportunity for growth for all concerned is one of the greatest challenges we face in our complex society, but allows us to avoid violence, intolerance (EU, 2015), and hate and racist incidents (CENSIS, 2018). Most OECD countries, in fact, recognise the need to develop students’ social and
emotional competences, since these are key to the creation of their sense of belonging and, consequently, desire to be active citizens (Kankaš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019; OECD, 2015).

Creating an inclusive climate thus becomes a prerequisite for any educational process and to provide a high quality, equitable and inclusive education is one of the UN’s Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a resolution to which Italy has signed up. Education should play a strategic role in creating inclusive environments that embrace all aspects of difference (UNESCO, 2018). However, insufficient numbers of adequately trained teachers and the lack of a strong intercultural ethos are two of the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of inclusive education policies (Sleeter & Grant, 2009; Tarozzi, 2014).

In Italy, too, recent research evidences how the presence of motivated teachers, skilled in the management of complexity and difference, is a determining factor in the creation of inclusive learning environments (Malusà, 2015, 2019, forthcoming; Santagati, 2018). In fact, a great deal of national and international legislation (EU, 2013; MIUR, 2014; OECD, 2010) increasingly requires teachers to have intercultural competence (Portera & Grant, 2017), the attainment of which requires specific experiential training (Sharan & Sharan, 1987) to enable them to fully master the tools of mediation and leadership that are vital to the management of complex multicultural classes. To care for the other and oneself, to develop empathy, to allow time in which to get to know other and self… these are some of the competences necessary to the formation of authentic relationships that transcend individual differences and possible breakdowns of communication.

And how can teachers foster that emotional competence indispensable to the creation of an inclusive school environment?

**Meeting the other: the bodily dimension**

Social psychology reminds us of the importance of taking all forms of communication into account, both verbal and nonverbal. But effective communication represents only a small part of the communicative processes: all too often, communication is “incongruent” – mixed messages are sent – and coherent and intentional transmission of meaning between sender and receiver fails (Burgoon, Hunsaker and Dawson (1994)29. Even in the absence of intentionality,

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29 Their communication model is a matrix, with the x axis being the intention to communicate, and the y the observation of the communication. The coordinates are possible outcomes: communication, attempted communication, attributed communication and behaviour.
however, we cannot escape the fact that everything we do and say communicates something to the other. The first axiom of the pragmatic model of communication is that:

... one cannot not communicate. Every behavior is a kind of communication. Because behavior does not have a counterpart (there is no anti-behavior), it is not possible not to communicate (Watzlavick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1980, p. 48).

Non-verbal language, in fact, includes a wide range of communication behaviours that convey meaning: body posture and movements, gestures, facial expressions and eye movements, tones of voice, physical appearance, the use and management of space, and even ways of structuring time (Giaccardi, 2005).

The different dimensions of non-verbal communication play are a crucial element of intercultural dynamics.

People from different cultures not only speak different languages, but inhabit different sensory worlds, structured according to cultural conditioning. And so intercultural communication can often involve instances when a different way of perceiving creates opposing meanings and obstacles to communication (Minascurta, 2016, p. 145).

In educational contexts, moreover, awareness of non-verbal communication signals is vital to learning how to interact well with the other. And above all, we cannot continue to leave our students' bodies outside the classroom, acknowledging them only in the obligatory PE classes, or we have to intervene because students are rebellious, and exhibiting oppositional-provocative behaviours, often refusing to stay in line: in the fixed rows of seats that imprison them and are completely unsuited to active learning, or the acquisition of social competences.

Moreover, “being-in-the-world-with-others” (Iori, 2002, p. 14) – not just a simple “being in proximity to” – requires a bodily dimension in educational care, in a relation of reciprocal listening. But the taking care refers “not so much to the things that are done, but to how they are done” (Manini, 2007, p. 19), and this requires “a body accustomed to being present, taught through reflective practices which do not separate doing and thinking, feeling and acting” (Zagatti, 2009, p. 54), and include that metaphorical dimension of play which allows the creation of significant intersubjectivity (Dallari, 2018).

Cooperative play as an educational tool

Ludendo docere
Play is an essential field of experience for learning (Bertolini, 1982). Psycho-pedagogical research has clearly shown the didactic efficacy of play and its benefits to learning processes, in that the development of emotional intelligence and self-esteem supports cooperation, problem solving, creativity and cognitive development. In fact

learning by doing [...] does not mean simply and mechanically making learning “stick” by practical action, but the fact that play activates a synergy of thought and action, mind and body, intelligence and emotion, according to the process of embodiment that is widely discussed in phenomenology and cognitive sciences (Farné, 2016, pp. 36-37).

Play thus becomes an experience that escapes conformism, and allows three different dimensions to be experienced: risk, error and adventure (Farné, 2016). Through these elements, play enables us to better know both self and other, in an atmosphere of joyful discovery, often not found in schools (in the West, or anywhere else), which have, since the 17th century, overwhelmingly adopted transmissive approaches. Allowing space for play, and in particular for cooperative play, means that teachers can nurture students’ emotional competence (Goleman, 1996), which is necessary for the building of inclusive relationships, in other words:

it is a matter of recognising, naming, taking and managing own and others’ emotional characteristics. Being emotionally competent is, also, being empathetic (Dallari, 2018, p. 4).

And so, why not start the school day with a game? Or even with a series of games, not chosen randomly, but aimed at the steady building of a class group whose members are open to knowing themselves and the other, initially almost “tip-toing around”, but gradually more and more deeply, thus developing a sense of belonging and mutual trust. Games in which time is legitimately devoted to the building of positive relationships, transcending the hackneyed verbal codes, to encourage a sense that they are welcome, feelings of wonder, and a desire to do things together. Games which enable a collaborative class group to form, step-by-step, creating a joyful learning environment where teaching activities in which everyone can feel truly included can become part of the school day.

This is my vision of how the school day should begin. And it is a vision shared by others: For more than thirty years, at Findhorn – a holistic education foundation in the north of Scotland – people have been coming together from all over the world to experiment with experiential learning models aimed at facilitating an “integrated and balanced development of mind, body,
emotion, spirit”, in the words of the organisation’s mission statement on the Findhorn Foundation website (www.findhorncollege.org).

David Earl Platts30 (1996), one of the first members of the community, was instrumental in developing a range of ideas designed to enable the steady creation of a climate of trust, mutual respect and cohesion within a group, thus creating a space in which all differences can become shared resources. Since 1974, his method has been used with hundreds of visitors of all ages and nationalities who participate every year in experiential personal growth courses at Findhorn.

And these play sessions are particularly suitable for the everyday educational contexts in which teachers operate.

**Key elements of Findhorn’s cooperative games**

**Mirroring**

*This creative and attunement game is a non-verbal musical exercise*. Choose a partner. Decide who is A and who is B and stand facing each other. [...] When the music starts, A, you slowly begin to move your hands and arms in gentle gestures, later moving your torso, head, leg and the rest of your body in any way you choose. B, you *simultaneously* mirror A’s action, replicating every movement in the same moment. Begin slowly until you have established good contact with each other. The object is [...] to established a creative flow between you. Eye contact is helpful, but expand your awareness to include your partner’s entire body…[continue]

(Platts, 1996, p. 97)

What are the premises of the Findhorn games? According to the principles of psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1988; Brown, 1983), they are cooperative *(win-win)* games; they encourage joyful engagement with others; facilitate the gradual growth of self-awareness, relationship, and teamwork competences; and, last but not least, take each person into consideration holistically, supporting educational (and not therapeutic) journeys.

This attention to *facilitating* – and not manipulating – processes informs all of these games, and can be understood, in this context, as an approach which

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helps, supports and allows something to happen; accepts any outcome as valid, useful and worthwhile; focuses primarily on people and their needs; respects people and accepts them as they are (Platts, 1996, p. 19)

To create a genuinely rewarding learning experience, play sessions need to provide for gradually increasing engagement (Fig. 1) to encourage participants to open up to others, to explore, to trust; and to enable conflict mediation and support group harmony. Each session is usually punctuated by at least one break.

The games vary, according to a group’s age range and other characteristics; each session thus requires detailed planning, and the flexibility to adapt to whatever may unfold. Each session lasts a few hours, and needs a suitable setting and a harmonious alternation of more dynamic activities with those more conducive to introspection and exchange – sometimes verbal (debriefing) – with one’s “playmates” (Table 1).

David Earl Platts (1996) advises, in the planning of a session, that one:

− includes more introspective games only if the group members have known each other for some time and all feel relaxed;
− establishes the games’ goals gradually: first facilitating awareness, then trust and/or group harmony;
− sets out, in detail, an schedule of the possible games, the time needed for each game, the materials necessary and the steps it involves.

Table 1- Purposes of Findhorn games
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPENING GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to bring the group together</td>
<td>Greeting dance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awakening circle</td>
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<td><strong>NAME GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to allow people to get to know one another, starting with learning everyone’s name</td>
<td>Ice-Breaker</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACTION GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to release tension and relax the group through movement</td>
<td>Everybody is it</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freezing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SILLY GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to continue to dissolve personal shyness and facilitate initial contact with the other</td>
<td>People-to-people</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CREATIVE GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to stimulate personal and group imagination through the creation of a shared production</td>
<td>Morning routine</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Energy shower</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REFRESHMENT BREAK</strong></td>
<td>A break between the first and second parts of the session, to help participants to integrate the experience; participants are asked to stay together in order to facilitate a natural, informal sharing of experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TRUST GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to guide the participants step by step to experience a feeling of trust in self and other</td>
<td>Shoulder massage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The tired butterfly</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CLOSE-TOUCHING GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to deepen trust, through physical contact</td>
<td>People-to-people</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shoulder massage</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SELF-EXPLORATION</strong></td>
<td>to overcome prejudices, regarding both self and other</td>
<td>Free association</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REVELATION GAMES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EMPATHY AND CARING GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to allow communication (verbal/non-verbal) in harmony with oneself and with the group</td>
<td>Mirroring</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hand-to-hand communication</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CLOSING GAMES</strong></td>
<td>to complete the journey</td>
<td>Group spiral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEEDBACK OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td>to share, work through, integrate the experience</td>
<td>Post-it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sensitive, experienced facilitator will be able to choose the games best suited to each group, and be flexible enough to respond gracefully to surprises.
Having first-hand experience of cooperative play themselves naturally makes it easier for teachers and educators to work skilfully with the multiple dimensions involved in these activities, and to be flexible and considerate in holding the space – a welcoming environment of mutual trust – in which each can meet the other.

**Educational experiences aimed at teachers**

For all of the above reasons, I always include one or two play sessions during my workshops for teachers, to create a harmonious work team; or in the first months of school, to encourage an inclusive, non-judgemental, classroom climate. And even if I do not have much time, I always prefer to balance my contribution in such a way that I give a short theory-based introduction and then follow it up with an experiential workshop (as at this IAIE conference, and elsewhere) (Figure 2), because it’s impossible to *talk* about play without *playing*, at least a little.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 2- Example of a short play session (Amsterdam, IAIE Conference 2019. Workshop)*

Sometimes short (c. 90 minute) workshops are enough to experience a dimension of listening and trust and to motivate people to bring these experiences into the educational contexts in which they work (Fig. 3).
But what do participants report after one or more play sessions? I will now give a brief outline of the results of three studies on experiential learning paths (Kolb & Fry, 1975; Kolb & Lewis, 1986) with primary and secondary teachers in two regions of north-eastern Italy.

**a) Exploratory study**

An initial, exploratory, study (Malusà, 2016a, 2016b) was conducted in 2013-14, involving a total of 98 teachers. I monitored 5 training courses on the Findhorn Foundation’s cooperative activities and games. In each (10-16 hour) module I collected data through an educational needs questionnaire, a feedback questionnaire and a follow-up meeting. The results underline how, in a climate of mutual trust, this approach enables the development of relational competences and the creation of a collaborative team. Initial analysis of the debriefing meetings reveals the value of the training for the personal and professional growth of the teachers: it was immediately transferred to their teaching methods.

**b) A mixed-method study**

A second (mixed-method) study (Malusà, 2018) examined the impact of a training experience involving 142 teachers in 5 state comprehensive schools (Istituti Comprensivi) from 2014-2017. Again adopting the Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984), each 10 hour module

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31 In the first study the sample (91 females and 7 males) consisted of teachers from 22 different countries, teaching in primary schools (65%), middle schools (27%) and high schools (8%). Each course had an average of 21.6 participants.

32 In the second study the sample included N=88 primary teachers, N=18 secondary teachers and N=6 in-service educators (10,5% from 1-10 years; 25.2% 11-20 years; 64.3% >20 years).
included experiencing cooperative play (Platts, 1996), Kagan structures (Kagan, 1992) and cooperative learning models (Cohen & Lotan, 2014; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). In each (2-4 hour) work session, role play (concrete experience) was used as a starting point to stimulate reflection on one’s experience, followed by a theoretical reworking of the experience to facilitate its transferability to the classroom. Using **Convergent parallel design QUAN + QUAL** (Creswell, 2015), I monitored the 7 (non-obligatory) courses through:

i) a self-evaluation report at the beginning and the end (open questions, on a 5 point Likert scale);

ii) a follow-up meeting, participant observation, the materials generated and photos.

Using **SPSS21**, the response frequency (mode and mean) in the self-evaluation reports, and the relationships between professional descriptors (years of service, qualifications, discipline(s) taught) and the observed variables (methodology, transfer, competences) were investigated.

All the qualitative data collected in **ii)** were transcribed and a thematic analysis (Mortari, 2007) was carried out, using **NVivo10**.

The games introduced proved highly popular ($\mu=4.62$; $\text{Mo}=5.00$; $\text{Ds}=0.643$), participants’ motivation to use active methodologies increased during the course, from $\mu=3.59$ to $\mu=4.25$, and they felt that their professional competence had increased ($\mu=4.17$; $\text{Mo}=4.00$), with a greater positive effect expressed as having been experience by primary teachers (61.4%) than by secondary (38.9%); and by teachers who had been working for 11-20 years (58.6%).

The thematic analysis confirmed the rapid creation of collaborative teams in a climate of mutual trust, but suggested a need for longer periods of experiential training. The key elements that come up in the follow-up meetings with the participants were:

- the value of sharing with colleagues;
- the capacity to empathize with the experience of others;
- the opportunity to experience and to experience oneself, to put oneself on the line (personal growth);
- increased motivation on the part of the participants;
- a joyful, tranquil and welcoming work climate;
- the rapid creation of a close-knit work team (an “amalgam” of the participants);
- a good balance between experience and reflection;
- a compelling, hands-on, approach readily transferable to the classroom;
- creative input for the development of new ideas;
requests for more experiential training spaces in which to further explore the method;
the difficulty of introducing these methods into middle schools.

Similar points also appear in the open responses to the final self-evaluation questionnaire. The terms most frequently used to define the strengths of the course refered to a particular aspect of the group - the active personal engagement, which allowed participants to share experiences enjoyably, directly experiencing the games that they could now introduce in their classrooms.

Criticism of the course, on the other hand, mostly related to organizational and time factors: the teachers said that they preferred training events to take place in September, because doing in-service training at the end of a day’s work with students was very demanding. The 10 hour course, moreover, was not considered long enough to properly develop the requisite social and methodological competences. The participants’ growing awareness showed them how necessary to pursue this training. Chiara and Victoria (not their real names) wrote: “I definitely need more training to make me more confident about using this approach in class”; and “I would like to have more training like this, so as to have more input and maybe some replies to the 'thousands of' questions the children ask me everyday in class”.

c) A qualitative study

A third (and on-going) case study is focused on how to make the classroom an inclusive place, analysing the dimensions of trust; it has adopted a qualitative design (as most suitable for picking up on the other relational and emotional factors involved in the educational process). The sample currently consists of 47 teachers who attended a short in-service course (1-2 sessions of 3-6 hours) on cooperative play in 2018/19.

The fact that 21.13% (N=30) of the original participants did not attend the last winter session of the course evidences how difficult this is, due - according to the teachers who did come - to overtiredness or other, clashing, school commitments. Three people (2.1%), however, decided to withdraw from the course because they considered it to be too demanding.

The teachers work at 3 institutions in the Veneto (a region in the north-east); 15.4% work in nursery schools; 61.5 % in primary schools and 23.1% in middle schools.

The sample in 2020 will include a group of classroom assistants and 3 groups of teachers from 3 cities in northern Italy (Trento, Padua and Vicenza).
The teachers’ comments in the debriefing meetings are analyzed, beginning with Post-it notes on which they were asked to sum up, using key words, “What I learnt” and “What I experienced” during the course.

Here too, the preliminary results (Fig. 4) show that the common denominator is the discovery of self and other in a relational atmosphere of joyful fun, complicity, collaboration and trust.

![Wordcloud](image)

**Figure 4 – Wordcloud of most frequent words (at least 2 frequencies)**

As two participants wrote:

- Today I learnt that to enter a state of well-being it is first necessary to work on oneself. I felt relaxed because I gave space to my emotions without censoring or judging them.

- I’ve learnt that we all have a joyful, childish side... that makes you feel good. Sometimes you need to know how to free it! I felt welcome, accepted, strong, secure, at peace, entertained.

**Conclusions**

Although their sample sizes are small, the studies presented here give us some useful pointers towards ways in which a more inclusive classroom climate can be fostered.

a) The results highlight the importance of experiential learning which enables teachers to acquire the skills necessary for effective classroom management (Sharan & Sharan, 1987). Through the direct experience of games and cooperative activities, followed by reflection on these experiences and their theoretical reelaboration, the participants said that they felt their professional competences had strengthened, and that they were more
motivated to use games and participative methods in the classroom, confirming the hypothesis that the fostering of students’ social competences requires socially competent (Malusà, 2016b; Malusà & Tarozzi, 2017).

b) The processes of accepting self and other (Caddy & Platts, 1992) require carefully considered timings and spaces (Malusà, 2019), in order to be able to create the kind of inclusive school climate that fosters effective learning processes. My analysis indicates that it appears to be easier to introduce active teaching methods into primary than secondary schools: in the latter many teachers complain that the organizational structure is more rigid, leaving few opportunities for shared planning with colleagues. However, by building a cohesive, collaborative work team which plans together, this obstacle can be partly overcome (Malusà, forthcoming), and cooperative games are a valuable tool for this purpose.

c) These courses proved to be opportunities for emotional growth for the teachers, allowing them to deepen their awareness of the many – often implicit – messages involved in non-verbal communication, and to foster their emotional competence in a joyful, pleasant educational environment, which included a wider vision of relational well-being.

A short experiential training course, however, cannot fully develop adequate relational competences, and the teachers highlight the need to organize longer, more regular experiential in-school programmes, to enable them to gain the solid foundation of social competences required to work effectively in multicultural classrooms.

d) Lastly, the Findhorn games integrate bodily, relational, metaphorical and meta-cognitive dimensions which allow the playful experience of the encounter with oneself and other(s) to be elaborated and re-elaborated, involving ever-deeper inner levels, and ever greater balance within the mind-body-spirit continuum (Assagioli, 1988). And the “felt” integration of bodily experience, defined by someone as “embodied educational practice” (Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2012), plays a crucial part in self-development as a facilitator of increased awareness. Thus understood, cooperative games afford opportunities for self/other-knowledge and the overcoming of stereotypes and prejudices through effective – i.e. active, collaborative, intentional and reflective – learning (Novara & Di Chio, 2013), in which bodily experience is accorded the attention it deserves.

Cooperative games are not, however, a panacea which can miraculously melt the tensions within a group, but a tool which, when used consistently, contributes to the creation of a
peaceful learning environment and equips people with the emotional competence necessary for successful mediation in conflictual situations, an attribute which, in fact, has been required in schools since 1997, when the OECD launched its DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies) Project, where we find Competency Category 2: Interacting in Heterogeneous Groups, which includes the abilities to: (a) Relate well to others; (b) Co-operate, work in teams; (c) Manage and resolve conflicts (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 12). The wide-ranging OECD study on Social and Emotional Skills is still on-going, aimed at providing policy-makers, educational institutions, families and communities with a tool kit for facilitating students’ social and emotional learning, because developing these kinds of skills is also increasingly important for communities and nations as a whole, as they have links to increased levels of civic engagement, volunteering and social integration, better interpersonal trust and tolerance, and a decrease in anti-social and criminal behaviours (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019, p. 10).

And all teachers, of course, have experience of how a harmonious class group can tackle even the most challenging educational offers. In both primary and secondary schools, therefore, co-operative games can be an effective tool for building or redefining a climate of acceptance in which everyone feels valued – or at least accepted – as their (unique) self, without prejudice or discrimination.

References


Articles. Strand 6: Education relating to migrants and refugees
Dr. Virginia Signorini. Power and (dis)empowerment in the Italian refugees’ reception system

Abstract

In this contribute I aim to reflect on the dynamics of power, empowerment and disempowerment inscribed in refugees’ experiences when learning a language as second language; I will refer – grasping from my experience of social worker and researcher - to the contradictory dimension of the “Italian language school” organised by a refugees’ reception project in Italy.

When entering the project refugees are always invited to respect the rules of the project, including attending the language school. The project might “punish” the refugee if the frequency to the school is irregular, and a possible sanction is the reduction of the pocket money that refugees regularly receive from social workers every month.

Such (infantilizing) practices promote dynamics of control and asymmetry in a relation based on the power held by the project towards refugees. At the same time learning Italian language still represents an important step to gain autonomy and access to fundamental rights. Which are the possible alternatives to support refugees’ learning process? Which are the practical experiences that lead to a positive and successful way of learning Italian language?

In my proposal I will demonstrate how an empowering culture of asylum represents a concrete answer and a counterstrategy to depoliticizing and depersonalizing policies that affect students with refugee background.

Introduction

Exile derives from the Latin *exsilium* (Curcio, 1971, p. 384) term composed of *ex*, outside, and *solum*, earth. The practice of exile is intrinsically linked to important historical moments of humanity; think of the forced escape of the Holy Family from Herod's persecutions, or of Muhammad’s escape from Mecca to the Medina. The exile has represented, in past centuries, a punitive practice towards guilty and persecuted, who were thus forced away from their motherland.
The term asylum derives from the Latin *āsylum* and the Greek adjective *asylòn* which means inviolable, that which cannot be subjected to violence (Battaglia, 1980, p. 731). The concept of asylum has existed for hundreds and hundreds of years, it is the basis for the reception of many nomadic civilizations, who practiced solidarity and protection towards foreigners. Thus there are references both in ancient texts and in sacred texts such as the Old Testament and the Koran. Forced migration has to do with this double dimension: the expulsive one and the welcoming and inclusive other. This dualism is strictly connected with what Yuval-Davis defines as *bordering*, “the everyday construction of borders through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of transnationalism” (2013). With the spread of globalization, the classic concept of border goes into crisis, as the link between nation-state and territory is questioned, which sanction the preamble of the definition of border, strongly linked to the land. But globalization does not represent the end of borders, far from it, it is constituted by a "proliferation of borders" (Mezzadra, in Salvatici, 2005, p. 107) which go beyond the purely spatial meaning, and project themselves externally to places of production. The figure of the refugee "(...) who was supposed to embody the man of rights par excellence, marks the radical crisis of this concept" (Agamben, 1995, p. 139).

In this article I propose to enter analyse the bordering and de-bordering practices that deal with being refugees in Italy, focussing on one of the fundamental elements that could determine – for some aspects – being excluded or included in the new country of asylum. I will consider the experience of learning and teaching Italian language as second language to refugees, in particular to asylum seekers and refugees living in reception projects. Methodologically I will take into account my personal experience as social worker first and researcher then in the field of reception projects in Italy; moreover I will refer to three in depth interviews with teachers of Italian language, two of them are currently working in public school teaching Italian language to adults and one of them is the co-founder of a language school by volunteers and citizens from a small village where was a reception camp for asylum seekers. There is no doubt that learning the language of the country you move to is a fundamental tool to integrate. In Italy asylum seekers and refugees are welcomed in governmental projects of different nature and length since the national reception system is based on fragmentation and heterogeneity. Surely in many of those experiences – from refugee camps to refugee projects – learning Italian language is a fundamental starting point, considered a compulsory criterion to stay in the project. Nonetheless on many occasion refugees do not regularly attend language school and this create a problem in the relation with social workers and the project. You might
easily hear a social worker asking refugees: “why don’t you go to school?... Italian language is fundamental for your integration so why you waste your time sleeping instead of going to school?”.

In my experience as social worker in a reception project, I once had a conversation with a woman coming from Ethiopia. I insisted on the same (stupid) question: “why are you not attending the school?! And how can it be possible that after two years in Italy you still cannot speak Italian!?” I fixed in my mind her clear and simple answer: “I cannot go to school because I have no space in my mind. I only have space for the memory of my kids”. She referred to her twins, she did not see and even know about since the past two years. In that extremely specific moment, I realized how my question would have affected her daily sufferance, promoting an ethnocentric and infantilizing relation.

**Becoming refugees in Italy**

Starting from the end of the 1980s, the refugee figure plays a role of minimal importance in Italian legislation; we start talking about refugees from the beginning of the nineties, with the numerous arrivals of citizens fleeing their own country in conflict, in particular from Albania, Somalia and the territories of the former Yugoslavia (Petrovic, 2011, pp. 41-44; Macioti and Pugliese, 2003, pp. 38-51). From the moment in which numbers of fleeing citizens asking for asylum appear, much higher than those to which the country was accustomed, and not having a reference point for their taking charge, the response from civil society takes hold. It creates a series of reception projects, thus initiating experiences in various cases, including positive and important ones, but in fact extremely disconnected from each other due to the lack of a control room at national level that allows uniformity. Even today, this heterogeneity and fragmentated dimension is a central and fundamental part of Italian reception system (Signorini 2014; Benemei, Scarselli and Signorini 2016) and it reflects the constant perception that the presence of asylum seekers must deal with emergency (Marchetti 2014).

In 2002 a national model has been institutionalized and it was the System of Protection for Asylum seekers and Refugees – so called Sprar project - but due to its incapability to welcome all the people landing the country and applying for asylum it has always been joined by emergency projects.

To cope with the constant migration crises, governments implement classification processes for the migrant population, de facto determining their administration and promoting a process of
governmentality (Foucault, 2005). The crisis therefore becomes a biopolitical device, a government technique that justifies that clinical humanitarianism (Mallki 1996) capable of dehumanizing and silencing history and politics. In the history of the Italian asylum system of the last twenty years, if 2002 represents the moment in which experimental reception experiences are regulated with the establishment of the Sprar, 2008 and 2011 are the years in which the number of forced migrants who have sought international protection in Italy have touched historical peaks. The presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the Italian socio-political landscape have assumed importance in times of crisis, justifying the emergence of emergency solutions and of a transitory nature but unable to root good practices and accomplices in the weakening of those experiences that would instead premise an institutionalization. This also had repercussions on the choices and intervention policies regarding reception and access to social rights; and this is what has happened in large part in the Sprar experience, which although it has given rise to positive and professionalising experiences at national level in conscious contrast to a last minute vision of forced migration, over the last few decades has experienced the substantial difficulty to move from the project dimension to the service dimension. Asylum in Italy seems to have had to continually confront with the confirmation of an absence, or that of the recognition itself of its presence.

Moreover, 2015 is the year identified by many as the beginning of the new Refugee Crisis, in the face of the global movements of citizens fleeing conflicts that still produce remarkably high numbers of asylum seekers worldwide, just think of Syria. The data regarding the presence of asylum seekers in Europe from 2014 to 2015 tell of an exponential increase in arrivals equal to the doubling from one year to the other, up to counting the presence of over one million three hundred thousand people in 2015 (Campomori 2016, p.10). When the data are observed globally, however, it emerges that 84% of people who fled their homes in the following years also stopped in countries outside European borders (Ambrosini 2019, p.18), thus weakening fears of invasion and emergency that for years have been accompanying news relating to arrivals in many countries such as Italy (Ibidem). However, this does not mean that the management of protection and therefore the reception of forced migrants who land on the Italian peninsula are faced outside of a familiar emergency dimension. In fact, the year of the refugee crisis also marks the birth of the Extraordinary Reception Centers, which will represent another model of hospitality-making in Italy.
But if 2015 is indicated by many as the year of the Refugee Crisis on a global level, for the Italian context 2018 marks the beginning of the Crisis of the right to asylum: for the first time, asylum seekers are excluded from ministerial projects for integration, now only for refugees, and they are managed in "camps" (Pinelli 2014) which guarantee minimal services such as food and lodging. A central statistical figure not to be underestimated is that asylum seekers represent the largest number of forced migrants present in Italy; they are therefore the real element of crisis to be controlled and isolated.

Until then the Crisis device had promoted myopia (Whyte 2011) and distraction allowing public emergency policies and weakening the development of a "culture of asylum" (Signorini 2014) at the Italian level. This production of invisibility to the detriment of asylum seekers produces the dehumanization of people and the depoliticization of law. It is no longer a policy of myopia but of blindness, which declares its victory over the crisis: we have made the uncertain (asylum seekers) invisible and the deserving (refugees) integrable.

It is in this framework that I will position my analysis related to practices of resistance and re-definition of identity through actions that pose the basis for an “empowering culture of asylum”.

**Time**

to me however the project, it is true, gave me the opportunity to stay for more than six months without paying the rent, but after six months I received the letter saying that my stay within the project had come to an end. After the exit I had to start all over again, I had to start from nothing and I had to use my personal relationships to be able to continue living in Italy for a long time before having my first job. (interview with Louis young refugee, 2012)

From the first stages of the asylum cycle, a forced migrant has to deal with uncertain and interminable waiting times: from the release of a document, to the date of convocation in the Territorial Commission for the hearing, and still interminable months of waiting for the answer. Refugees in Italy are therefore educated to wait from the beginning, because the times of bureaucracy depend on an elusive mechanism that is not easy to control, modify, influence. Refugees must also get used to the bureaucratic times of reception, which in many experiences are characterized by a rapid countdown during which people are called to reinvent new lives. The lack of coherence and unity becomes a source of insecurity even for those who are trying, precisely through these unique and few dedicated resources, to move forward in a life project.
The reception projects, whether they are more stable and rooted in practices such as the Sprar or of an emergency nature, have a beginning and an end. It is marked by the signing of a reception contract between those who welcome and those who are welcomed. Many of the projects I could get to know both during my researches and my personal professional experience has a fundamental point inside this contract, and it is the activity of learning Italian language.

The nexus between time and learning the Italian language needs now a few more reflection. As mentioned above after 2018 national reception system drastically changed and today an asylum seeker will find reception in a camp where he or she will spend the time until the Territorial Commission – which is the Governmental institution for asylum application valuation – will decide whether the applicant can get or not any form of international protection, as refugee status. This procedure could last more than a few months; it can last even more than one or two years. During this time asylum seekers are isolated and reduced to become tolerated presences in a non-place. Those camps will provide to basic needs which do not include Italian language courses. This is the time of waiting, wasting, and wondering.

On the other hand, once an asylum seeker becomes a refugee he can access to the further step of the Italian asylum-cycle which consist entering an integration project – the former Sprar today renamed Siproimi – where the contract time is six months-one year. During this time, the refugee can access to integration courses, job research, training opportunities, public school and – of course – Italian language school. In these six months although the refugee person is supposed to have already a quite good level of Italian language, otherwise the job market would be difficult to access, moreover in only six months. This is the time of producing, learning, and fasting.

There is one key issue related to the time of learning in reception projects: attending language school it is compulsory. If the host refuse to go to school the project might take back the “pocket money”. Projects provide not only housing and food but also an amount of money for personal needs. The monthly pocket money is used as a "prize" for having perhaps followed the Italian course or for sharing other initiatives envisaged by the projects; with the idea of an educational tool, mechanisms are activated that refer to educational practices based on the combination of reward / punishment. Pocket money can always be used as a means of control or downgrading, such that, for actions that go against project choices or positions, it is decided to decrease the quota or suspend it for a period. It is interesting to underline that even in Italian the projects use the English term “pocket money” to mask a much more uncomfortable term, that is money.
The asylum system requires refugees to play the ideal typical role of refugee-guests, constantly implementing disclosures and acts of trust, asking to adapt to the reception contexts, often bartering their dignity with infantilization or labelling practices (Zetter 1991, 2007), and the refugee risks to be treated as a «passive recipient of aid» (Puggioni, 2005, p. 330).

Asylum seekers are thus required to live in a long and uncertain time of temporary condition, without the possibility to access fundamental rights and instruments of inclusion; on the other hand once the Government recognizes to some of them the possibility to stay they are required to hurry up and quickly become ready for the job market in order to integrate. This time in the Italian refugee-cycle is therefore a time that promotes important objectives to be achieved but which also tells of overturning perspectives, lack of sharing, disorientation. This bureaucratization produces illness and vulnerability, making the refugee speechless (Mallki 1999) and thus governable.

At the same time, in order not to risk falling into the habit of describing refugees as victims, and therefore embrace the fundamental premise of wanting to circumvent the de-individualizing power of labels and imagine a more rapid abandonment of the refugee category in favour of that of citizen, among the hypotheses proposed, please refer to the one relating to the importance of recognizing the agency component in the protagonists of the asylum system. This concept refers to a form of active intentionality that distances itself from simple daily practices (Ortner, 2006, p. 136) and the ability to reinterpret and mobilize a range of creative resources (Sewell, 1992). In the debate related to the passage from refugee to citizen the concept of agency assumes a fundamental power. It tells us about the recognition of counterstrategies (Ong 2003) activated by refugees and recognized by the new society. It will be about this last passage, the society that recognizes refugees’ agency, that I will dedicate the next lines.

**Empowering voices**

When I was at the very beginning of my professional experience in the field of forced migration, I used to work as social worker in a Sprar project. I remember this relation with a lady coming from Ethiopia, I will here name her Almaz, she travelled with her actual husband and both were looking older than they actually were. Both of them experienced hard moments as refugees in Sudan refugee camps and then – for the fear to be sent back to the home countries one the camp was dismissed – they decided to take the risk and cross the Mediterranean Sea. Once they landed
Italian coasts, they could move to some refugee squats in Rome and only after a few months in Italy they could enter, as asylum seekers, the Sprar project where I used to work. It was 2007 and at that time we had a small language school for the asylum seekers and refugees living in the project. At that time too going to school was compulsory and often related to the possibility to receive or not the pocket money.

Almaz used to attend the class quite regularly at the beginning but for her the language level still was basic, even after a long time after we first met. In that time asylum seekers could be still be welcomed in integration project, so they had quite a long time to spend inside and to improve their capacities to deal with the new country. For Almaz it became harder and harder. She started to avoid the school and she still was at the same, identical language level. One afternoon we met in a bar for a coffee and I remember myself posing her one of the most banal but brutal sentences I could pronounce: “Almaz, how can it be possible you still don’t understand or speak Italian language?!”. Almaz simply replied: “because I have no space in my mind”.

I knew her personal story, I knew that she was far from her kids in the last three years and she had no news about them since a long time. I knew she was raped in jail while crossing Libya and I knew she risked her life while crossing the sea. But I still did not take it in my memory. It was her that with a few words had to motivate it to me. While I was treating her like a child and disempowering her condition of woman, with her own agency.

But if the agency of Almaz had not to do with learning Italian language, in the spaces of other schools this dimension assumes a different power, which allows to reformulate the key-question reception projects should pose to the refugees they work with and which is: *why people don't go to school?*

In the summer of 2019, I could meet two teachers that work since years with adult’s asylum seekers and refugees teaching Italian language and that I here propose as case study to reformulate the hypothesis that through practices of recognition of refugees’ agency it is possible to create an empowering culture of asylum that goes in opposite direction to the mainstream political denaturalization of this fundamental right.

The first teacher is currently working in a public school that offers language courses for adult migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees. Anna defines the language as an excuse, a tool to access further levels of inclusion:

more than ever it is a great opportunity for the public school to be able to truly collaborate in an integration process, let's say how we want it to have an important social impact because it produces a sense of belonging, because
language is so many things. When you teach people like our students, the language can truly become the key to access, to understand communication, and it becomes an opportunity for community to meet again, it becomes a non-neutral but half-warm place where you can start to rediscover yourself. (Interview with Anna, summer 2019).

In her words Anna describes her role not only as the one who gives you “grammar indications”, but she assumes a more political and social role, due to the inevitable relation that occurs during her classes. She tells me that the very first moment she realized how changeling and at the same time complex was the issue related to learning, teaching, and forced migration took place in a moment she decided to work on students’ Curriculum Vitae. She had a class full of asylum seekers living in a Extraordinary Camp settled in the middle of nothing with only few services. Most of the students were young male coming from West Africa and they all used to ask her information about job research and job opportunities in Italy. She suddenly realized that all her students did not have any integration service in the Camp where they used to live and she decided to overcome the border, working with them and helping them writing their Curriculum Vitae in Italian.

I worked on the professional orientation of these people and therefore the drafting of the curriculum ... and why did I do it? it wasn't my job …what the hell are you doing? You are an Italian teacher, so does your thing well… But I could not avoid asking myself: what did these young guys need? They need a welcoming place where everything is suspended, where you laugh, where you feel good, where you make fun of yourself, where you suspend what is the past and project yourself towards what is the future. This is also one of the reasons why the trip, the traumatic past, has never been talked about in absolute terms, except when someone said it and things were said in a private way and not published. Fortunately, the school was a bubble of protection, a container in which people felt that they could achieve their goals. (Ibidem)

There is a strong contradiction in the actions narrated by Anna, since she assumes a role that is not only the one of teaching the language but is providing instruments to do a proper job research; it become surely a risky dimension that might promote confusion and further fragmentation but in this specific contribute I do not intend to reflect on the consequences of role positionings, rather on ethical positionings. With her actions this public teacher supports her corner of public school becoming a space of promotion of empowerment, where a student not only could get more instrument to get included, but also to feel recognized as person with its own agency. School then becomes a place where students might not be able to finally learn the Italian language because “they have no space in their mind. But – at the end – they attended the school every day!” (Ibidem).
The second case-study is the experience of Mario, a man that lives in a small village near Florence and that became part of a precious experience after a new refugee Camp was unexpectedly settled in his small town in 2017. Since the very beginning he describes refugees’ arrival as something supernatural:

This story happened as if a spaceship had landed in this village of 190 people with about thirty black men inside and this shocked the country! (Interview with Mario, volunteer in language school for refugees, summer 2019)

After a few days the whole local community organized a petition to go against the opening of the Camp. Mario was amongst the few fifteen people who did not signed and suddenly this little group began to meet in the evening to understand what was going on,

And we met in the evening after dinner to ask ourselves: do you know who a political refugee is? We discovered that we knew very little and we had a common place and we started doing interviews and a path of self-training and self-care” (Ibidem).

After a few months the Camp was settled in the small village and some of the “little black man inside the spaceship” came out of it and started to build up a relationship with this group of autochthonous. Suddenly this common space became a space of exchanging questions, experiences, information and of new point of views. Mario narrates how surprising was for him to experience the fact that some of them were unable to read and write, and one of them was mathematic. He had to overcome the borders of the first impression and go deeper the knowledge.

So, what do you do? let's hear, let's sit at a table, let's hear what they need ... what do they need? then the school was born like this. A big mess at this table sometimes 15 people sometimes 5. Nothing has ever been planned but every Monday and Tuesday from 5 to 7 for two years there has always been someone: someone brought homework or holiday books, I saw a slate, someone brought home-made canapés... (Ibidem)

After a few months, the opening of the asylum seekers’ Camp, Mario and the others realized they had built up a sort of “little school”. In this experience – as for Anna - a key-point has been the capacity to find the time to question people about their needs:

in fact, when people tell me "you did a school of Italian", I say: “no!” . Of course then they learned Italian as a relapse but ours was a school of proximity. I am next to you with the intent to create familiarity because I am Italian I am next to you, I do not bite, we also talk about what both of us care about and try to solve some problems. (Ibidem).
But what about the social workers and the daily dimension of the Camp? This little informal school was taking place in the same little village where the Camp was but Mario underlined, he always tried to keep the distance from the cooperative that was responsible for it. Until they were somehow obliged to relate; it happened when one of the students was feeling bad and needed to go to the hospital. He is a young asylum seeker coming from Afghanistan, Mohamed, and most of the volunteer of the Little School was treating him as their child. They found out that he suffered of Diabetes and his access to the hospital was really a sort of miracle. In the day of the discharge from the hospital the cooperative sent the operator who was on business shift that day, but when the nurse started to give him instructions on which medicines to buy and how to administer them, the operator came away, leaving the poor young man there only because “this was not part of his duties” (Ibidem). Finally some of the volunteer of the Little School went to the hospital and gave assistance and a passage back home with the car to the young Afghan. Not only the cooperative did not took in charge the young boy, but the coordinator also called by phone Mario “reproaching us for having carried out a task that was not our responsibility” (Ibidem).

Anna and Mario voices report of de-bordering actions, through which they could promote a contact with the asylum seekers they were supposed to simply relate as teachers or fellow citizens. And it is in such experiences that we might suppose to find that space missing in the complex and frequently traumatic experiences of forced migration.

Conclusions

The Italian asylum system has foundations firmly anchored in the management of the third sector and in an emergency dimension, which for too long has fuelled an interpretation of asylum as an unexpected event. Considering refugees as carriers of their own agency means promoting a relationship with the asylum system that does not only speak of victims to be saved or children to be cared for and educated. In this contribute – using the dimension of the language learning process - I proposed to reflect on how the relation between bordering policies and de-bordering practices is fundamental to recognize the necessity of an empowering culture of asylum.

At the same time, it will be insufficient if such practices are not accompanied by a redefinition of the context in which they are inserted. If this awareness does not fit into a holistic change,
such that all refugees have the opportunity to access the same reception conditions and where the enjoyment of rights does not depend on randomness, the presence of an uncertain and grey area will be maintained; and the refugees will find themselves having to activate their agency strategies always within containers of suffering.

Notes

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Maura Sellars PhD, Scott Imig PhD. School Leadership, Reflective Practice and Education for Students with Refugee Backgrounds: A Pathway to Radical Empathy

Abstract
As the world becomes increasingly violent and disruptive by forces which impact on millions of families, destroying the communities and ways of life, the lives and prospects of those who survive are increasingly dependent on the humanity of others for understanding, generosity and acceptance as fellow humans. Many of those who suffer forced migration as refugees and asylum seekers are children and you people who have the right to be educated and whose future wellbeing is heavily reliant on acceptance and inclusion into societies which are very different from their homelands. Whilst only a relatively small percentage (16%) of these populations are placed in schools in developed countries, the challenges for both the students and school leaders is considerable. This paper discusses the importance of belonging as part of school culture and ethos, indicating that deep, critical reflective practice undertaken by school leaders and principals with the intention of deliberately developing radical empathy, based on phenomenological principles, can play a critical role in transforming schooling for these students and their families. Furthermore, the possible impact of developing radical empathy is explored briefly using the perspective provided by Leithwood and his colleagues’ Four Path model of school leadership.

Introduction
A massive diaspora is upon the world and millions of families, men, women and children have been forcibly separated from their homelands. By the end of 2018, nearly 79 million people had been displaced. Of these 3.5 million were deemed ‘asylum seekers’ and 26 million were classified as refugees (UNHCR, 2019). 84% percent of the world’s refugees are currently located in developing nations, notably Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda and Sudan. Of the 16% who find themselves in the world’s developed countries more than half are children under the age of 18. Western school leaders are currently working to provide education for these 2 million plus children. In unexpected places like New South Wales, Australia, 1 in every 100 students in the state is recorded as a refugee, with much higher rates in and around major urban centres (Watkins, Noble & Wong, 2018). Sadly, these students are frequently seen as deficient, despite
their resilience, problem solving capacities and persistent hope for their futures (see, for example, Sellars & Murphy, 2017) and instead are often perceived to be damaged, fraught with problems and somewhat burdensome (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Sheikh & Anderson, 2018; Watters, 2007). In this paper we focus on these students’ inclusion in, and capacity to contribute, to school culture and the resultant ethos of the learning community, in addition to the powerful role that principals and school leaders play in creating this inclusive environment for these student populations. We explore deep reflection as a means by which principals and school and school leaders can identity their own professional values, beliefs and understandings in order to purposefully, deliberately and consistently put all these aside in their attempts to develop the capacities for radical empathy.

School Leadership and Student Belonging

In order to be embraced as fellow humanity and integrated in the societies of their new homelands, these students need to be fully included into their mandatory school environments. There are many barriers to this authentic inclusion (Sellars, 2020). Many of these barriers are easily identified. There may exist problems with language, social and religious customs and norms, lack of, or intermittent prior schooling may be some of these. Other, less well articulated barriers, include racism, discrimination, bias, ignorance and superficiality (Sellars, 2020). Amongst the most potentially damaging and dangerous barriers are lack of knowledge and assumptions about what it means to realistically belong at school. A sense of belonging is recognised as an important component for student wellbeing and overall school success (Donnelly, 2000; Glover & Coleman, 2005; McLaughlin, 2005; Osterman, 2000; Sellars, 2017b). It is a particularly critical aspect of education for students with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and experiences (Basklin, Wampold, Quintana, & Enright, 2010; Carlton, 2015; Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Lam, Chen, Zhang, & Liang, 2015). School belonging can be characterized as the students’ capacities to access and to contribute positively to the culture and ethos of the school. How authentically this is facilitated and effected is the largely attributed to the professional capacities of school leaders, most particularly the principal.

School leaders are at the heart of all education systems. They set the school’s direction, they develop the staff and they shape the organisation’s structure. Leaders are second only to classroom instruction among school factors that lead to student learning accounting for nearly 25% of the school effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Even more noteworthy, the importance of
leaders increases in more challenging environments or as schools face difficult situations (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). They determine, create and maintain school ethos, considered to be a product of the culture of the school (Solvason, 2005). School culture has been defined historically by Erikson (1987, p 12) in a manner which still reflects the life of school communities today. He states school culture is:

...a system of ordinary, taken-for-granted meanings and symbols with both explicit and implicit content that is, deliberately and non-deliberately, learned and shared among members of naturally bonded groups.

School ethos, however, has been more difficult to define. Deeming it as more elusive in nebulous than school culture, Alder (1993, p 63-69) proposed that school ethos was wide ranging, determining that it was:

...human activities and behaviour, to the human environment within which these take place (especially within the social system of an organization), to behaviour and activity which has already occurred, to a mood or moods which are pervasive within this environment, to social interactions and their consequences, to something which is experienced, to norms rather than to exceptions, and to something that is unique.

The difficulties of students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and experiences become apparent when considering how exactly school culture can be made available to those who are outside the ‘naturally bonded groups’ of school culture, how they can become part of school culture and ethos and how they are able to play their part in developing and shaping these vital school chrematistics. How students are inducted into the ‘norms’ of the school ethos remains challenging for many school leaders in ‘western’ school systems, due to the degrees of ‘difference’ in racial, cultural, social and religious norms, beliefs and values that are perceived as characteristic of these populations. Attention to these differences and the exclusionary impact that may result from decisions made as a result this focus is typically known as ‘othering’ (Foucault, 1998; Said, 1978) and not only impacts negatively on students, but on their entire communities (Pinson & Arnot, 2007, 2010; Pinson, Arnot, & Candappa, 2010; Sellars, 2020; Watters, 2007). It is the responsibility of all school leaders to reflect critically on the impact of attitudes, perspectives and values that perpetuate superficiality, prejudice and bias at objective, systemic levels (Lemke, 2000), institutional levels (Zizek, 2008) and at the subjective levels of individuals. In order to engage with this responsibility in
ways that genuinely facilitate student inclusion in the school ethos and climate, school leaders, and principals in particular, need to consider their own values, beliefs and assumptions in their professional decision-making.

**Reflective Practice and Empathy**

Though directed and mandates by a number of laws, directives, syllabi, compliances and regulations, school leaders in general and principals in particular, have choices in the ways in which they interpret, implement and make meaning from these compliances and conformities in order to construct school culture and school ethos (Sellars, 2017a). Many of the decisions that are made about the inclusion of students with refugee and asylum seeker experiences and backgrounds predicated on the ways in which individual leaders understand and interact with their own belief systems, values and principles in the context of their unique professional environments. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016), in their discussion of the difficulties of school leadership in the 21st century, advise school leaders to develop their ‘personal codes of professional ethics based on their experiences and critical incidents’… especially ‘when confronted with dilemmas concerning inequity, injustice and care of young people and children (Sellars, 2020, p 114)’ This work argues that, in order to confront the multiple dilemmas that are presented in their attempts to authentically include students with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and experiences in their communities, and in the culture and ethos of the school, they must engage in critical reflective practices and reflexivity in order to develop a perspective of radical empathy.

The notion of empathy has attracted considerable attention in various disciplines for a number of years. Davis (1983) discussed empathy as a complex construct, indicating that his four-dimension scale increasingly lends itself to a multidimensional approach. He lists *perspective taking* as an indication of better social functioning, *fantasy* as a psychologically emotional response, *empathic concern* as feeling of sympathy and concern for others and *personal distress* which he describes as feelings of anxiety and discomfort in emotionally charged social situations. Whilst all of these dimensions of empathy may be frequently experienced in the context of understanding the trauma and lost endured by individual with refugee and asylum seeker experiences and backgrounds, none of these, as individual or combined traits, have the potential to guide principals and school leaders in the decision making that is required to embrace these students as fully integrated and included into their school setting. Other research into multidisciplinary foci include Hopple and Choi-Fitzpatrick (2017), who introduced their
engineering students to the study of empathy in order to encourage them to create something that would be used for the social good of society. Mirra (2018), also suggested that students should begin to understand empathy through literature and other materials used in classrooms, developing a four-part model she termed ‘Typology of Empathy’ (p.11) the critical components of which were based on inclinations towards social/political action or not, and motivations towards mutual humanization or not. A plethora of other studies provide medical perspectives from various fields (see for example, Domes, Hollerbach, Vohs, Mokros, & Habermeyer, 2013; Jeffrey, 2016; Koss-Chioino, 2006), education (see for example, Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Davis, 1983; Marsh, 2012; Peck, Maude, & Brotherson, 2015; Rogers, Dziobek, Haaanestab, Wolf, & Convit, 2007; van der Zee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002). Many of these studies discuss the difference between three key types of empathy. Cognitive empathy, which is the deliberate attempt to accurately understand someone else’s emotional state. Cameron, Hutcherson, Scheffer, Hadjiandreou, and Inzlicht (2019) found that individuals avoided engaging in this type of empathy as it was considered to be difficult cognitive work. Empathy is discussed as various domains and frequently associated with compassion (see for example, Jeffrey, 2016; Lampert, 2006; Rector-Aranda, 2018; Singer & Klimecki, 2014; Williams, 2008) Although exact definitions may differ, there are important aspects on which authors appear to agree. Emotional empathy, which is an automatic response to the emotions of others and often causes the individuals to literally ‘feel’ the emotions of others and compassionate empathy which is generally regarded as the sympathetic response to others’ distress (Decety et al., 2012). The final type of empathy pairs empathy with compassion, which is understood to be empathy with an urge to action, are discussed as separate constructs in the work of others. However, Ratcliffe (2012, p. 477-479) identifies these as ‘mundane’ empathy, concentrating instead on the possibilities and potential for the development of radical empathy.

**Radical Empathy**

Radical empathy is perceived to be apart from, and essentially different from other types of empathy. It is argued that cognitive empathy, whilst being deliberate and focussed on understanding the plight of those being emphasised with, may not involve any emotional response or obligation to action and an overly emotional response may be inappropriate and unsupportive (Ratcliffe, 2012). Similarly, the notion of compassionate empathy with its tradition of action, is historically associated with gifting- a practice which is associated with
personal satisfaction for the giver- and not solely on the individuals with whom they empathise (Lampert, 2006). Koss-Chioino (2006 p. 663) defines radical empathy stating:

Radical empathy provides a feeling of direct and deep connection with another person who may be a stranger. This can result in an amplification of the quality of relation in a general way that includes both other persons and all Others beyond an individual’s local world.

Ratcliffe (2012) also proposes that radical empathy is a deliberate and mindful action that takes individuals beyond the habits, norms and connections of their own local worlds, that constrains the use of social cues and suppositions and that eliminates assumptions. Based on the methodological approach of Husserlian phenomenology, Ratcliffe suggests that this premise of understanding reality as the ways experiences are understood by human consciousness, and not be some objective agreed independent construction of reality, can facilitate (p. 473) the development of radical empathy and to better understand the reality experienced by others. He explains,

As I interpret Husserl’s position, the experience of belonging to the world is not a matter of having a belief-like intentional state with the content “the world exists”. Rather, it involves—amongst other 280 things—having a sense of reality, by which I mean a grasp of the distinction between “real”, “present” and other possibilities, without which one could not encounter anything as “there” or, more generally, as “real”. We generally take for granted that others share this same modal space with us and that they are able to encounter things in the same ways we do (p. 479-480). In the case of students with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and experiences, their carers and wider communities, principals and school leaders have the responsibility to reflect on and respond to, the fact that these populations are not sharing this ‘modal space’ and are not always able to ‘encounter’ things they experience in the same way as others who do not have shared experiences. In order to avoid ‘mundane’ empathy, and promote inclusivity for these students, principals and school leaders need develop radical empathy, where the reality of the systemic, institutional and individual components of schooling is not assumed, taken for granted or presumed. This is despite this comment from Ratcliffe (2012, p 490), ‘The sense of belonging to a shared world is not even acknowledged as a psychological achievement, let alone one that sometimes poses a challenge for interpersonal understanding’. In order to develop radical empathy, principals and school leaders need to prioritize a sense of belonging as vital for student wellbeing and success and reflect deeply to identify the realities with which they understand and make decisions in their professional capacities. Many of these realities will be
buried deep in the sub conscious and will have high levels of emotional intensity attached (Hall, 1976). All of these perceived realities will impact on the routines, rules, decisions, classroom interactions and relationships and expectations that form part of any educational setting (Sellars, 2017a). Most importantly, unless made redundant in the development of radical empathy, they will significantly influence the interpersonal activities that comprise all four leadership pathways (Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock, 2017).

Four Pathways Model

Nearly a decade ago, Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) developed a model of leadership that attempted to capture the multiple ways the work of school leaders affects students. This Four Paths Model describes the tasks in which principals engage along a rational, emotional, family and organisational path. These paths are explained in the paragraphs that follow but it is important to note that, as with all models, they include multiple variables organised through the researchers’ judgments. Leithwood and colleagues crafted two defining principles for all included variables within each model. Firstly, the variables can be influenced by school leaders and, secondly, they have significant effects on students. This former principle is particularly pertinent to this work. While we are cognizant of the numerous mandates under which school leaders operate, we believe that engaging with radical empathy and the associated reflective practices along the four pathways offers school leaders opportunity to find necessary insights and latitude to make a difference in the lives of students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Thinking in novel ways to support all students is the fruit of a process and it begins with an effort to understand others. Hall (1976), in his Cultural Iceberg model asserts that what we can see in individuals from other cultures tells us little about the values, thoughts and beliefs that underlie their external persona, and this has significant implications for school principals and leaders.

The rational path is focused on the knowledge, skills and practices of a school’s professional staff related to the act of teaching and student learning. On this path, principals and school leaders influence the quality, type and quantity of instruction, the groupings of classes and grade levels, the foci and types of assessment, and school-level disciplinary practices. Reflective practitioners on the rational path are, for example, encouraged to confront their decision making about class groupings and reflect on the current delineations (by age) and its appropriateness for children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. It is sensible to expect that students with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and experiences who have never experienced print
materials for example, to be organized into classes to learn with western 15-year old's who have been *formally educated* for 10 years? Reflective practitioners are challenged to set aside the assumptions, usual practices and the reasoning behind these decisions and to analyse their school’s dominant pedagogical and organizational approaches, not to image what it would be like for these students, but to attempt the share the reality of these school experiences with the students and their families by engaging with radical empathy.

The emotions path captures teachers’ feelings and dispositions about their work, students, colleagues, and community. On this path, principals can create a sense of collective efficacy among the staff believing that they can make a positive difference for all students and achieve established school goals. Principals can affect staff commitment to their students and the school, and they can facilitate or decimate trust amongst staff. Staff commitment to the organisation is particularly important as schools with teachers who have lower sense of empowerment and/or lower perception of their leaders also have lower school academic performance (Imig, Ndoye & Parker, 2008). Reflective leaders on this path are required to reflect on the ways in which they are modelling behaviours and attitudes towards the students with refugee and asylum seeker experiences and backgrounds, not just overly but also in terms of how they are developing a shared school ethos and a school mission statement which is supported and contributed to by all the staff. These principals and school leaders are challenged to reframe their conceptions of intelligence, notions of fairness and means of inclusion Only by engaging in deep reflection, discarding all their notions, cues and conventions, can the staff, led by the school leaders and principal, begin to develop an openness to the realities of others and not use their own frames of references to interpret the realities of others experiences. This is particularly vital to the development of school culture and ethos, and to the authentic interpretation of inclusion, which can only be achieved by experiences of the students themselves and that of their wider communities. In order to establish if these student populations and their communities are included as school community, it is critical to understand how they themselves understand the experience, and therefore the reality of inclusion. Without these realities, school principals and leaders have only their own hypotheses and conjectures, which are meaningless in terms of the realities of others and as evidence of successful inclusion and the contribution of these populations to the school culture and ethos.

The family path is focused on parents’ perceptions, expectations and communications. This pathway is inclusive of family variables over which the school leader can have a significant
impact. On this path, principals can improve the tone, type and frequency of communication from school to home. Parents who have never experienced formal education themselves, or who have felt unwelcome or unvalued by their child’s school may have their views altered on this path. Reflective practitioners on the family path are challenged to audit the communication that goes home to families of refugee and asylum seeker students. Communication includes conversation at principal- parent meetings, teacher parent meetings, assemblies and other written and oral communications. These are opportunities to listen and respond respectfully to various cultural norms, expectations and values and to celebrate these differences. This can be an area of great sensitivity and principals and their staff communities must reflect critically and conscientiously in order to communicate in ways that affirm these populations as part of communities, especially in cases of illiteracy or unfamiliarity with terms and traditions. The only way in which to assess effective, meaningful communication with students, families and communities it to listen and respond with radical empathy. It only by dismissing the familiar statements, notions and interpretations that are usually commonly interpreted that the realities of the communicative experiences can be assessed as inclusive, meaningful and effective. Principals and school leaders on this pathway must scrutinise school policies, procedures and routines through the realities experienced by other frames of making meaning, in order to authentically accommodate degrees of difference, irrespective of multiple variables.

The organisational path is focused on the way schools are set up to help or hinder teacher planning, collaboration and relationships. This path is also inclusive of school safety policies and practices and necessary services to support staff and student wellbeing. School leaders on this pathway can develop shared planning and instructional times to facilitate collaboration and learning among teachers and they can ensure they have adequate support staff to address the wholistic needs of staff and students. Reflective practitioners on the organisational path should reflect in the support systems they have in place to support staff wellbeing as they work and struggle to develop the skills and strategies to respond appropriately to both the trauma and challenges and the skill sets that many students with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds are bringing into the classroom. The reflective practice that facilitates the development of radical empathy, a critical aspect of teachers’ work, can be understood to be emotionally and cognitively challenging, physically exhausting and identity altering in the professional contexts of their work. Principals and other school leaders have powerful responsibilities in this pathway and provide both the support and practical encouragement for all staff to sustain an environment in which staff and students, families and communities can belong.
Principals and school leaders, operating light years away from the geo-political conditions which have produced the global wave of individuals with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, are now at the forefront of facilitating successful settlement in new homelands, much of which is challenging and all of which is unfamiliar. These leaders are challenged, not to simply engage in reflective practice, but to take positive actions to fulfil their responsibilities towards these students. They are challenged, not to emphasize in the ‘mundane’ (Ratcliffe, 2012), but to take action to improve the lives of these students by enabling effective strategies for inclusion, belonging and wellbeing. They are challenged to become transformative leaders (Mezirow, 1991) as the result of their critical reflection and development of radical empathy, and to act to change the dominant, deficit views of communities under their leadership. They are challenged to understand that belonging, wellbeing and sense of emotional security are the facilitators of academic achievement and need to be accorded that priority in school environments. And, they are challenged to realize the potential, the power and the possibilities of their leadership roles through reflecting upon their own beliefs, attitudes and presumptions, evaluating the impact these have on their professional decision making and then casting all these aside in order to appreciate the experiences and therefore the realities of others. In this manner, principals and school leaders can make a difference.

**Conclusion**

By proposing that inclusion, belonging and wellbeing for students with refugee and asylum seeker students, their families and communities can be facilitated by these populations accessing and contributing to school culture, we have placed principals and school leaders at the forefront of effecting considerable change to themselves, their staff, their institutions and their educational systems. We have proposed that deep, critical reflection of the professional values held by school leaders, especially principals, and the impact that these have on their decision making may prepare them to engage in the development of radical empathy as a means by which authentic engagement may be facilitated. As the development of radical empathy is a deliberate, conscious abandonment of personal and professional cultural cues, traditions, practices, assumptions, belief systems and values in an attempt to be open to the participation in another’s experiences and realities, it requires a dedicated systematic approach of reflection and investigation of the presumptions and taken for grantedness of our own daily lives. The impact of radical empathy on school environments has been very briefly illustrated through the lens of the Four Path Framework (Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock, 2017). In many ways these
implications are similar to Hall’s cultural iceberg, in that we have pointed to some obvious impacts at a surface level only but the full potential of radical empathy needs to investigated and explored in the context of the complexity of a school which counts students with refugee and asylum seeker experiences and backgrounds as members of school culture, ethos and community.

Notes
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Refugees in Portugal: four case studies of refugee integration in schools in the receiving country”

Abstract
These case studies are part of a broader research that the Centre for the Studies of Migrations and Intercultural Relations (Universidade Aberta) is undertaking.
We analysed children and parent’s educational backgrounds and children’s adjustment to the Portuguese educational system through questionnaire and interviews to four families of refugees.
The four families come from Syria and Palestine but their integration in Portugal is very diverse, due to their expectations towards staying in Portugal, returning to their country or moving to another where they have already relatives.
These families, with different educational backgrounds, live in Lisbon or on the suburbs of the city, in a suitable home for the household, receive support from host institutions, and children attend nearby schools where they have been welcomed and receive help especially with regard to the learning of the Portuguese language as well as other learning difficulties. Families expectations have influence on the effort of learning Portuguese, especially concerning the parents, on the value they attach to children success in Portuguese schools, the relationships they establish with schools and in particular with their children's teachers.
Furthermore, the host families and the friendship networks were very important for the integration success of those families.
In the four case studies children’s age influence their attachment to Portuguese schools, primary school children adapt more easily to Portuguese schools, teenagers who have attended schools in their countries of origin show difficulties in adapting to Portuguese schools and some have left them and sought to find later on a job.
To conclude: four case studies, four different families, four diverse realities.

Resumo
Os estudos de caso apresentados fazem parte de uma investigação mais ampla que o Centro de Estudos de Migrações e Relações Interculturais (Universidade Aberta) tem vindo a realizar.
Através da administração de um questionário e de entrevistas a quatro famílias de refugiados em Portugal, analisamos o percurso de formação de pais e filhos e o seu ajuste ao sistema educativo português.

As quatro famílias são originárias da Síria e da Palestina. Contudo, a sua integração em Portugal é muito diversificada devido às suas expectativas em relação à permanência em Portugal, ao regresso ao seu país ou à mudança para outro país europeu onde têm parentes.

Estas famílias, com formação diferente, moram em Lisboa ou nos subúrbios da cidade. Têm residência adequada para a família, recebem apoio de instituições anfitriãs e as crianças frequentam escolas na zona residencial. Foram bem acolhidas e recebem apoio escolar, especialmente na aprendizagem da língua portuguesa, mas também noutros domínios onde apresentam dificuldades de aprendizagem.

Verifica-se que as expectativas familiares influenciam os esforços realizados para a aprendizagem da língua portuguesa. Especialmente no valor que os pais atribuem ao sucesso das crianças nas escolas portuguesas, nas relações que estes estabelecem com as escolas e, em particular, com os professores dos seus filhos.

Além do exposto, as famílias anfitriãs e as redes de amizade e vizinhança foram muito importantes para o sucesso da integração destas famílias.

Nos quatro estudos de caso, verificou-se que a idade das crianças influencia a sua integração na escola portuguesa. As crianças do 1º ciclo adaptam-se mais facilmente às escolas portuguesas, mas os adolescentes que frequentaram a escola nos seus países de origem mostram maiores dificuldades de adaptação, tendo alguns abandonado a escolarização para entrar precocemente no mundo laboral.

Concluindo: quatro estudos de caso, quatro famílias diferentes, quatro realidades diversas.

1. Migration flows to Portugal: a focus on educational issues

The main event in 2016, in the scope of international protection, was the deepening of the migration flows to Europe (around 1.3 million in both 2015 and 2016), in particular the massive flows from the Mediterranean region that crossed the Balkans to central and northern Europe.

As such, the number of asylum applications within the European Union (EU)-28 in 2015 and 2016 was approximately double the number recorded within the EU-15 during the previous relative peak of 1992 (Eurostat, 2019)
The Portuguese response focused mainly on collaboration and support management of flows in the countries where such movements enter - Greece and Italy - and took the responsibility over applicants for international protection.

From 2015 until April 2018, under the relocation program, Portugal hosted 1552 applicants for international protection. The majority of the applicants were from Syria (1 192), and were families of Syrian nationality (Serviço Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service [SEF], 2018). The following graphic shows the number of asylum applications in Portugal.
At present the number of applicants for international protection, from Syria and Iraq decreased strongly, which is in line with the international situation (Asylum Information Database [AIDA], 2019). Indeed, in 2018, only 638 thousand asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union, just over half the number recorded in 2016, and comparable to the level recorded in 2014, before the peaks of 2015 and 2016 (Eurostat, 2019).

In the same year, 2018, in Portugal, less than 10 requests from Syria and 11 from Iraq were ordered (SEF, 2017a, 2018). This fact is contrary to what occurred in the European context, where Syrian nationality remains to be the most representative.

In this context, a strongly and well organized system, in each receiving country, is highly required.

Where asylum authorities are not well-prepared, under-staffed or lack the necessary expertise, asylum seekers face significant obstacles in accessing the asylum procedure and risk being confronted with deficient and long asylum procedures. This may result in a less thorough examination of their application and in unfair denials of international protection. (AIDA, 2019, p. 8)

“A specialised and well-structured first-instance asylum authority, which is provided with adequate resources, is thus a key component of a fair and effective asylum system” (AIDA, 2019, p. 7).

In view of the urgency of intervention since the summer of 2015, the integration of people with refugee or subsidiary protection status has been a priority, especially those resulting of the flow peak 2015-16. Specifically, an appropriate integration requires: learning the Portuguese language; attending school; employment and a suitable financial independence; housing and healthcare access.
To reach this aim Portuguese government and civil society have been working together. More than 350 Portuguese organizations have decided to cooperate to respond to the needs of refugees at home, in Europe and in the countries most affected by this global humanitarian crisis.

Various responses from civil society have been taken, as like establishment of platforms of host institutions. In the context of this research, the host institution belongs to PAR (Refugee Support Platform - www.refugiados.pt) that is a platform born from civil society leadership and an initiative to provide a concerted response to the current global refugee crisis.

The host institution undertakes to engage its best efforts in helping the hosted family and fostering its integration in the local community for a period of two years. To that effect, the host institution proposes, either on its own-account or with the help of local partners or other third parties it succeeds in mobilizing, to ensure that the hosted family has the following hosting conditions (SEF, 2017b):

a) Lodge the hosted family in halfway houses, apartments or single-family homes;

b) Clothing;

c) A Monthly Family Allowance of 150 EUR per adult and 75 EUR per child, so that the hosted family may pay for food, public transportation, medication, telecommunications and others, until it is able to provide for itself in regard of those expenses;

d) Assisting the hosted family with learning the Portuguese language;

e) Assistance with employment market integration, and connecting with the proper institutions for purposes of foreign qualifications recognition in Portugal;

f) Assisting the hosted family’s school-age children with accessing education;

g) Assistance in accessing health care;

h) Assisting the hosted family’s household elements with their enrollment in Social Security.

In addition, the Portuguese government gives to all household members of refugee families the opportunity to access Portuguese classes for foreigners (adults) and a complementary program to help the Portuguese teaching at schools.

With this last objective in mind, a process was developed to facilitate the enrollment of children and young people, up to the age of 18, in the public educational establishments. For this purpose, a direct link was established between the host institutions of refugees and DGE (General Directorate of Education) services, providing information on the children and young people.

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36 To simplify writing in this text, the word “refugee” may mean people with refugee or subsidiary protection status.
people, as well as other elements considered relevant. On the other hand, the recognition of qualifications and validation of the competences of the citizens of legal age was also done. Even if the equivalence procedure may be pending, the immediate access to schools and classes, at basic and secondary levels, must be granted. In accordance with the law, schools should offer children appropriate pedagogical support to overcome their difficulties on the basis of an individual diagnosis, notably regarding their Portuguese language skills.

Since 2016, pedagogical activities have been adapted to the specific needs of refugee students with an “increased focus on Portuguese language training for non-native speakers (Português Língua Não Materna, PLNM). (…) Such adaptations include a progressive convergence with the regular curriculum by temporarily exempting students from certain subjects and additional Portuguese language classes” (AIDA, 2018, p. 83).

In 2018, the principle of access to Portuguese language training for non-native speakers were extended both in the framework of academic and vocational curricula (Decree Law 55/2018).

However, a perturbing circumstance, to be soon revised, was described by the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) in Country Report: Portugal 2018:

The review of the Portuguese educational system conducted in 2018 by the OECD does not specifically address the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. While acknowledging the impressive accomplishments of Portugal in recent years, it nonetheless raises concerns regarding persisting differences in students’ outcomes from under-privileged backgrounds, including immigrant students, with immigrant, language and ethnic backgrounds remaining highly predictive of their performance in school. (AIDA, 2018, p. 84)

In addition, refugees were invited to attend any Portuguese language training for adult people, as:

- The PPT (Portuguese for All Program) - an initiative that certify at level A2 - Elementary User and B2 - Independent User (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - QECR).

The courses were free and implemented by the Directorate-General for School Establishments (DGEstE), in public schools, and the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP, I.P.), through the centers employment and vocational training (High Commission for Migrations [ACM], 2017).

- Non formal programs – For example, among friends or through social institutions.
- The SPEAK Project, which consists of a linguistic and cultural program created to bring people together, where anyone can sign up to learn or teach a language or culture, including
that of the country where reside. There is a direct link between the SPEAK team and the respective host entities, in order to provide responses adjusted to the identified needs.

- The Portuguese Online Platform (pptonline.acm.gov.pt) presents content for acquisition of Portuguese language by adults who speak other languages. This platform is a tool that allows the user to practice the language in the linguistic activities of oral and reading comprehension and writing production, as well as learning and expanding vocabulary and knowledge of grammar, useful for everyday life. It is available in Portuguese, English and Arabic (ACM, 2017).

Also important is the assistance with employment market integration. Basically consists in helping the adult members to achieve their autonomy by means of employment market integration, and access to certified or informal training and foreign qualifications recognition (ACM, 2017). In Portugal,

there are no limitations attached to the right of asylum seekers to employment such as labour market tests or prioritisation of nationals and legally resident third country nationals. The issuance and renewal of provisional residence permits by the SEF, which clearly state the right to employment, are free of charge. The only restriction on employment enshrined in the law consists in limited access for all third-country nationals to certain categories of employment in the public sector. Furthermore, asylum seekers benefit from the same conditions of employment of nationals, including those pertaining to salaries and working hours. (AIDA, 2018, p. 79)

2. Case studies

We are carrying out a study on the integration of migrants in Portugal, especially regarding to education.

Are presented the results of the integration of four families from the Middle East, three of which were received by the same institution and whose integration process was very diverse. The 4th family arrived in Portugal a few years ago and doesn’t belong to this recent influx of refugees. The host institution is part of a Platform for supporting refugees (PAR) created in Portugal by civil society in response to this migration flows and is made up of religious, cultural, educational and business organizations, among others. The institution of our study is religious and social.

The data presented were collected from interviews with the families. We analyzed, preferentially, the educational background of parents and children and their adjustment to the Portuguese educational system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arriving date</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Sept 2017</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country origin</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Syria (Kurdish)</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Turkey; Greece (7 months)</td>
<td>Turkey (&gt; 1 year)</td>
<td>Turkey (1 year); Greece (2 months)</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members (age at arrival time)</td>
<td>father (32); son (7)</td>
<td>Father (40), mother (32), 4 sons and 4 daughters (from 4 to 18)</td>
<td>father, mother, 4 sons and daughters (7, 5, 3, 1) and 2 adults, father’s brothers</td>
<td>18 years-old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives in Europe</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Swiss, Sweden and Germany</td>
<td>Belgium and Germany</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last job (country origin)</td>
<td>Father: electromechanical technician</td>
<td>Father: construction.</td>
<td>Father: building industry - supervisor (20 yrs)</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language (at arrival time)</td>
<td>Father: Arabic Son: Arabic; English (A1)</td>
<td>Kurdish; Arabic Adults: English (A2) Mother: French (A1)</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic English (C1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: illiterate</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>post-graduation degree in Oral Surgery, Physical Rehabilitation, Bone graft and in Implantology. (at this moment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EU’s relocation program</td>
<td>EU-Turkey Statement (1:1)</td>
<td>EU’s relocation program</td>
<td>Portuguese Institute for Development Support (IPAD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab 1: Families characteristics.
2. 1. First Family

The first family of our study arrived in Portugal in May 2016. Originally from Syria, they came to Portugal from a refugee camp in Greece where they stayed for about 7 months, after a time spent in Turkey.

By that time the family members were the father (32-year-old) and a son (7-year-old), due the fact that the other members of the household still remained in Syria, where they kept on in various places depending on the war. Indeed, when the family tried to embark from Turkey to Greece the mother, who was pregnant, could not embark and returned to Syria with their two daughters of 5 and 3 year-olds.

This family came to Portugal under the EU’s relocation program and had hoped to regroup the remaining family as soon as possible. However, this was only possible in July 2019. So, the father and his son lived in their own residence, provided by the host institution, during the host program (24 months) and until the first days of July 2019.

About educational background, the father, an electromechanical technician, merely spoke Arabic. The son, besides his mother tongue, had some basic knowledge of English. The father acquired basic fundamentals of the Portuguese language, by the PPT program and a specific training course especially made for integration of Arabic refugees. However, any of those courses was completed, demonstrating grave difficulties in studying. Actually, the first objective of this man has been earning money to achieve financial independency for his family. Consequently, he started working, in a precarious job, as a car mechanic. After that, he got employment contract with other company. Unfortunately, a few weeks after the family arrived, an accident made it impossible for him to work. As a persistent person who is, stroke out as a taxi and a for-hire transport services driving license.

On the other hand, the eldest son, after a specific summer program for refugees, provided by an NGO, started attends Portuguese school successfully. In academic year 2019/20 attends the 4th grade and he is fluent on Portuguese language.

Finally, the family was regrouped in July 2019. They live in their own residence, in Lisbon. The mother attends a Portuguese language course, and she is looking for a job. The 4 children are in school nearby household and have shown a well integration both in school and with peers.

At this time the family does not intend to leave Portugal. The father says if he has a permanent job for him and his wife, the family remains in Portugal. If they don’t achieve these objectives they migrate to France where they have relatives.
2.2. Second Family

Arrived in Lisbon in September 2017 this family, originally from Syria (Kurdish), had spent 1 year living and working in Turkey when they applied to come to Europe under EU-Turkey Statement (1:1). It was provided by hosted institution a big flat at seaside near Lisbon, and support to health care, clothing and social integration. The seven youngest children were enrolled in school by January of following year, where they had specialized support for learning the Portuguese language. Meanwhile, a group of students offered voluntarily weekly assistance to improve language learning.

During the first year of schooling the young boys and girls have benefited a special integration program, focused in Portuguese language and promotion of useful skills to integrate successfully Portuguese scholar system.

The father and the oldest son had support in Portuguese language at home and were part of a co-working training for insertion in the labor world. They were unmotivated both in training and in learning Portuguese language. So, they did not engage in home classes and missed the course offered by Portuguese government.

The father has never got a job in Portugal. The eldest son worked during a month and the eldest daughter worked, as waiter, for 6 months. Consequently, the family was dependent financially from the Monthly Family Allowance provided by Government.

To facilitate the integration of this family, they currently reside in an area, in the interior of Portugal, where there is a shortage of labor in agriculture and industry. The firstborn son works in industry, and the eldest daughter was a bakery. The father remains unemployed with hard problems with Portuguese language.

In February 2019 a new child was born and mother stays at home with the baby and does some agricultural activities to produce a small number of goods for family consumption.

The kids feel integrated at school and in neighbourhood. One of them (12 years old), reveals hard problems of learning and he is under an especial program, and a 17 years-old daughter gave up the school.

Despite all integration efforts made by the host institution, there are no guarantees that the family will remain in Portugal. Indeed, the 2nd family reveals uncertain objectives about the future. Their main aim is economic growth easily, with slight work.

In addition, in the area where the family lives now, in spite of local authorities helped, about 50% of the refugees leave the region after some time.
2.3. Third Family

When the family arrived to Portugal the host institution lodged the family in a single-family good apartment at seaside near Lisbon; clothing for all members was assured, as well as an allowance to expenses. Integration in employment market was very important but learning the Portuguese language was indispensable for the head of the family to exercise his profession since he was supervisor in the construction industry, as well as for the other two adult members of the family that would like to continue their studies in Portugal. Consequently, the access to Portuguese classes for foreigners was assured. Children access to education was too guaranteed by the host institution that helped their enrollment in the school of the hosting area. Assistance in accessing the National Health System, in the health care center of the area of residence, and accompanying the hosted family in their first medical appointments was assured too, particularly because the mother of the family was pregnant.

Nevertheless, the family left the premises, without informing the hosting institution, after five weeks in Portugal. The following day children should start attending school.

According ACM (High Commissioner for Migration) in the “Report of Portuguese policy assessment for the reception of refugee people. Replacement program” (December 2017) about 51% of relocated citizens abandoned the relocation program, with 5% of those abandonments returning to national territory. Mostly, the secondary movement was more frequent in isolated adults (54%) and less in foster families (45%) (ACM, 2017).

According the Portuguese authorities Portugal was not, for some applicants, the first choice when transferring from transit countries (Greece and Italy). This factor is compounded by the fact that the three main nationalities transferred to Portugal (Syria, Iraq and Eritrea) have no previous communities, installed in our country, which raised difficulties in terms of language learning and cultural adaptation, factors that help to understand that 45% of the people relocated to Portugal are absent from the country, states the document quoted above, which makes a frankly positive assessment of the reception.

2.4. Stay in Portugal: Positive and negative aspects (1st, 2nd, 3rd families)

Positive aspects:

• The physical security of the family members;
• The access of the children to education and the possibility of being able to grow safely;
• The opportunity of new social and professional/academic acquisitions by both members of the family.
Negative aspects:

- Delays in the process of family reunification, with evident consequences in the family stability and in the psycho-affective development of the four children (1st family);
- Difficulty accepting the recognition of the father's job competencies (1st family);
- Poor motivation of adults in learning the Portuguese language (adults of 1st and 2nd families);
- Absence of a Syrian community in Portugal, family members were placed in other countries, namely in Germany (3rd family).

2. 5. Fourth Family

As it was already mentioned this family doesn’t belong to this recent influx of refugees. Desiring to be able to study medicine and given the conditions in Palestine, the first member of the family welcomed the bilateral aid program established between Portuguese Institute for Development Support (IPAD) and Palestine Government in the 90’s. He entered Dental Medicine, at University of Lisbon and completed his master's degree in Oral Surgery, Physical Rehabilitation, Bone graft and Implantology. The learning of Portuguese language was carried out through a one year course: Portuguese Language Foreign Language Course (PLE), Faculty of Letters of Lisbon. For the respondent this year was insufficient, having been very important the help of colleagues of the university residence. When he finished the course (October 2008) started working as a dentist.

This fourth interviewed has lived in Portugal for 19 years. He acquired Portuguese nationality and his wife has been in Portugal since March 2016, under family reunification. His parents were also able to come to Lisbon. All three have a residence card. Meanwhile, the family was broadened with the born of a baby, in October 2018.

All members of family have Arabic as their mother tongue. The dentist is now proficient in Portuguese and has an advanced level in English. His wife has a basic level in Portuguese and an advanced level in English. His parents and his wife were graduates. His wife graduated in Chemistry in Palestine. His father holds a degree in Accounting, Economics and Politics from Iraq and his mother is graduated in Physics Teaching from Egypt.

About the future, the family intends to stay in Portugal. The respondent states that if the situation in Palestine were more stable he would have returned. The family is well integrated in Portugal academically and socio-economically. Furthermore, his wife aims to finish her master's degree in Chemistry, in Portugal.
2.6. Stay in Portugal: Positive and negative aspects (4th family)

Positive aspects:
• To have been able to study medicine that was his main objective;
• Work in the area that is specific to him as a specialist in oral surgery and Implantology.

Negative aspects:
• The impossibility of living in Palestine after the course was completed;
• The family reunification was only possible after many years.

3. Possibilities of understanding these different cases

The four cases presented are very diverse: attempt of integration, non-integration and integration. Thought, we will try to present some possibilities of understanding:

3.1. Language

The great difficulty of integration of the father of the 1st family and also parents and eldest members of the 2nd family is the language, since not being fluent in Portuguese prevents them from finding a stable job with a fair wage.

However, the excellent integration of the child (1st family) is related to his rapid language learning. This have been stopped the father to move to another European country. Refusal to learn Portuguese may be one of the signs of non-integration.

3. 2. Motivations

As have been showed, the 2nd and 3rd families had a desire to achieving economic stability in a short time. For the 1st family this was not the firstly aspect, but rather, unity and family stability.

The insistence of the host institution in trying to guarantee this objective has made the family seeks to remain in Portugal.

The 4th family is based on the academic and professional motivation of the 1st member. His success has allowed him to become more integrated in the country and the possibility of grouping the whole family.

3.3. Qualifications
In the case of 1st and 4th families certification is a differentiating factor. The father of the 1st family has professional qualifications that are not compatible with the degree of technical requirement of Portugal. In the case of the 4th family, the fact that the first member came to study in Portugal is a plus, together with his excellent ability and continuous professional development.

3. 4. School Integration

Integration is very diverse in these families, due to their expectations towards staying in Portugal, returning to their country, or moving to another country where they have already relatives.

The children of these families, with different educational backgrounds, attend nearby schools where they have been welcomed and receive help especially with regard to the Portuguese language learning and in relation to other learning difficulties too.

Based on the interviews, data can be concluded that children age influence their attachment to Portuguese schools. Indeed, primary school children adapt more easily to Portuguese schools (1st family), teenagers who have attended schools in their countries for years show difficulties in adapting to Portuguese schools and some have left them and sought to find later a job (2nd family).

On the other hand, families expectations have influence on the efforts of learning Portuguese, especially in relation to parents, on the value they attach to children success in Portuguese schools, the relationships they establish with schools and in particular with their children’s teachers.

Adding, is essential to remark that host families and friendship networks were very important to the integration success of these families.

4. Conclusions

Education is a key element for refugee and migrant children’s social inclusion into host communities. In Portugal refugees and asylum-seeker children are legally entitled to access the host State’s education system on the same terms as those that apply to national children; this includes primary and secondary education including vocational training.

There are special programs for higher education of students from the Middle East of Mediterranean region, but for students from other regions higher education can be highly constrained.
In a report of United Nation Refugee Agency, United Nation International Children’s Emergency Fund and International Organization for Migration (UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM) it is said that countries like Czech, Denmark, Portugal and the Netherlands and the UK, have, nevertheless, managed to limit the gap between native-born and foreign-born children born outside the EU+. They also have some of the lowest levels of early school leaving in Europe overall, already below the EU. (United nation Refugee Agency, United Nation International Children’s Emergency Fund and International Organization for Migration [UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM], 2019, p. 9)

From the 1st and 2nd families we studied children adapted easily to the Portuguese primary school with the exception of a child with learning difficulties. Teenagers from the 2nd family at secondary level had difficulties and three dropped out of school. The first member of the 4th family was very successful in higher education and is now a successful professional. Parents have difficulties to learn Portuguese and are not motivated to develop the mastery of the language despite the help that was given to them.

If the situation in Syria improves, we think they will return to their country. Cultural differences, the difficulty of finding a well-paid job in Portugal and the desire to join up the extended family will take them back to their country of origin.

Finally, refugees and asylum seekers, must be seen as people who carry out a specific and unique life history, who seek a new lifecycle away from realities they have known and suffered.

Notes
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References


Articles. Strand 7: (Global) Citizenship Education
Arlette Audiffred. Knowledge to Action K2A Projects in Cherán Michoacán SDG # 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities to promote the intercultural competence of global citizenship

Abstract
The main objective of the project is to apply the 11th objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Cities and Communities to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by using the World Savvy K2A protocol Knowledge to action projects, design thinking with the students of the fifth semester (10th grade) at the entrepreneurship class in conjunction with the history class. The students aimed to develop a project to promote the social development of the Cherán community.

As students develop the core concepts, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors of global competence, they gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for how each individual affects and is affected by the problems and issues that face our global society.

Keywords: World Savvy, K2A protocol, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Global Citizenship, IES Survey

Introduction
The work was carried out in the community of Cherán Michoacán. The municipality of Cherán is located in the center of the state of Michoacán México, at the Purépecha plateau and it is considered as one of the main areas inhabited by the Purépecha people; It has a territorial extension of 221.88 square kilometers.

In 2011 the inhabitants of Cherán organized a democratic form of government that challenged the ways of doing politics. The Supreme Court of Justice of the Mexican Nation (SCJN) approved a constitutional controversy that allowed Cherán to be ruled by uses and customs. They chose in public vote, a Greater Council formed by twelve notables called Keri's (large) all proposed first in their fires (group of neighbors), elected in their neighborhood assemblies and appointed by the general assembly. Being thus the first community with form of government of uses and customs. (Rojas, E. 2017)
Experience abroad is a unique way to develop intercultural competence of global citizenship (Franziska (Trede F; Wendy Bowles W; & Donna Bridges D; 2013) but unfortunately around 70% of our students in our High School PrepaTec Morelia do not have the opportunity to travel abroad that is why we look to travel to unique communities in our state to be able to give the opportunity to students to work on this intercultural competence.

With this project we aimed to achieve an educational travel program with in our same country visiting a Indigenous community in which the style of life, costumes and culture is very different from the one of our students, “empirical evidence showcases global citizenship as a “value-added” learning outcome of educational travel” (Krystina R. S.; et al 2014)

Method

For this project we use the K2A Knowledge to Action Project for Word Savvy that is divided into 5 steps

1. Choosing an Issue
2. Empathize
3. Define
4. Brainstorm
5. Prototype
6. Test
7. Reflecting

First students must choose and issue that they are interested in are more passionate about it to start his project The SDG’s , UN Sustainable Development Goals, can be used as a starting point in generating ideas and passion. Students can examine this resource as a way to identify what topic they want to focus on. (World Savvy 2019)

The second stage and that I consider the most important one for creating the project is Empathize , that is to identify the persons that are impacted by the issue, in this part is where we visit the community of Cherán, in which students can get to know their stakeholders, they get to travel only for two aour to encounter a very different community and a very different culture, form and government and costumes and language. Teams gather all the information
spoken and non spoken from the Purepecha community using specially the interviewing method.

Ones students have meet their stakeholders and build empathy with then is time to define the issue they would like to work on, followed by the baterintarming stage where they have to come up with as many ideas to address the issue and at the end choose the top idea to prototype, is also important in this stage to discuss and analyze all the options.

Prototyping and testing are the next steps to create a model that is tangible and that can be presented to the stakeholders, at this stage students should have identified problems with the model and be able to correct them.

Finally the individual student reflection that is the best opportunity for growth and learning, for this part we use FlipGrid application for the students to make their video reflections.

Participants
The Parties Involved were:
Prepa Tec Campus Morelia
Senior Council Cheran K’eri
Organization Ejido Verde [http://ejidoverde.org/]
The Grail an International Women’s Movement [http://www.thegrail.org/]
local Artists of Cherán: Uriel Sanchez Fabian, Luis Giovanni Fabian Guerrero and Betel Pañeda.

The projects
The projects conceived by the 10th grade highschool students are:

- **HongoCherán**: search the production of mushrooms in green houses to develop the town economy, since only wild mushroom are only collected by women of Cherán during the rainy season.

- **ECOCCherán**: Project to promote ecotourism at the Cherán Zone highlighting the beauty of its forest, its water springs, ceremonial places and its cultural heritage.
• **Parhakpini Arhuntani**: that means “proudly indigenous woman” seeks to promote the urban art of local artist of the community, in addition to the creation of jobs for women throughout a company that will make sweatshirt with the local artist designs.

**Instrument**

To measure the intercultural competencies of our students the IES Intercultural Effectiveness Scale was used. The IES is a competency based assessment that measures the cognitive and non-cognitive tools students need in order to manage and leverage cultural differences effectively. Through a self-directed survey, students answer a series of Likert based, psychometric questions which are then compared across a control group of 40,000 other participants from 5 regions of the world. Survey results report a range of strength and weakness within 9 competency areas that are required to effectively interact and engage with people who are culturally different from ourselves. Students are able to use the information from their personal report to improve and adjust levels of intercultural competence. Teachers and tutors work with students individually and collectively to create intercultural learning activities and grow competency levels.

The IES provides students and teachers with individualized reports that document strong and weak points across 9 intercultural competency areas. Each report supports the learner and the tutor in locating areas for improvement, leveraging strengths and constructing a plan of action to meet personal and professional goals. The IES group report aggregates information based on the combined results for members of the target group. Patterns, trends and percentages can be evaluated and used to make suggestions regarding the target population, organization or institution. This report can be used to improve school/classroom culture, develop supporting curriculum and make improvements to increase collective levels of intercultural competence.

**Method**

• Compare and contrast students pre- and post-survey results to identify changes in the students development of multicultural competence.
- Identify and reflect on students learning experiences while attending PrepaTec that demonstrate areas of growth when addressing the 3 main dimensions and 6 sub-dimensions of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Survey.
- Support students in creating a visual representation to demonstrate specific outcomes related to their personal development for becoming a multiculturally competent graduate as a result of their tenure in PrepaTec.

**Statistical analyses**

**Demographics**

- Number of students in the generation who have completed the survey: **21**
- Semester: **5th, 12th grade**
- Percentage of students coming from bi-lingual schools or programs: **47%**
- Experience abroad: **29%**

**General Profile Pre-Survey**

The group report shows the number of individual placements in each competency area as well as Overall Scores ranging from low to high. A group can be placed on the integer chart based on the average of student responses to discover its general profile.

The 5th Semester Campus Morelia group was categorized in the pre-survey as a: **Traditionalist**
**Traditionalists:** Are satisfied with the status quo, preferring familiar people and places, and are apprehensive when placed in new situations where they need to learn or develop new associations. People with this profile are satisfied with their current level of knowledge and are likely not to pursue opportunities for their own personal development. Differences in others’ ethnicity or culture are not of particular interest. Putting themselves in new situations and learning new things or developing new relationships is usually more a result of external requirements than internal motivation. Traditionalists’ relationships will tend to be made up of family members or others who have been in close proximity to them over time and where there is clear functionality. Rather than expend effort to develop social networks, Traditionalists are more likely to spend time with a small group of friends or engage in solitary activities they enjoy—watching TV, taking a walk, and so on. Because they have generally surrounded themselves with the familiar and do not often trust or easily accept others outside their close circle, Traditionalists usually have not developed the interpersonal skills or the emotional stamina necessary to interact with and understand people who are different from them. Going outside their realm of familiarity can cause a great deal of stress. (Van Vleet M, 2016)
General Profile Post Survey

The 5th Semester Campus Morelia group was categorized in the pre-survey as a: **Explorer**

![Group Profile Image](Image 2: Group Profile IES Post_Survey)

Explorers Enjoy Developing Friendships with and learning about people who differ from them, but it is also emotionally challenging for them to do so. This profile describes people who are quite attentive to their social environment and quite interested in learning more about themselves and others. Developing relationships with those who are different is exciting to Explorers because it leads to more knowledge and self-understanding. However, while this self-knowledge and interest in other cultures serves as a foundation to build and manage their interpersonal relationships more effectively, it can be undermined by the Explorers tendency to assume more negative things about people whom they see as different. (Van Vleet M, 2016)

There was a difference in the results between post_survey and pre_survey, the traditionalist students profile was 31.25% on the total of student making this profile the predominant one, in
the post_survey the traditionalist students profile was lower only 18.75% and the explorar profile increase more than 3 times from 12.50% to 37.50% (see chart 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IES Profile</th>
<th>Pre_Survey</th>
<th>Post_Survey</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networker</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explorer</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelectual</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
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<td>Individualist</td>
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<td>Extrovert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
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<td>Globalist</td>
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<td>Detective</td>
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Chart 1: Results Pre_Survey and Post_Survey

Reflection

First of all, I learned to respect and appreciate my students at the beginning I was very hesitant to do the project because I wasn’t sure if my students where capable to carry such a project with good results, but they really amazed me with their commitment and their hard work.

The students really connect to the people of the community and I use this empathy to help them to reflect on the problems be face globally they learned to communicate and collaborate with different people in the community in a really active way that will prepare them to interact with people from all over the word, to thing weather their project was eco-friendly and to make them aware of the global climate change and what we need to do to help the environment, the student also work in making partnerships with other private institutions and governmental ones to learn about diplomacy, as a teacher I encourage students to be leaders and to take their own decision, also when facing set back they learned about resilience and how to come up with good and new ideas.

When I heard about their stories and their learning experience I feel very proud of them, they really inspired me to continue working, I feel that everything was worth doing and I realized how much they got engaged and how they enjoy this project.
As a Multicultural Teacher I want to keep working on social entrepreneurship projects because I learn that this is the best way to engage students in their learning and also to learn about others, to leave their comfort zone and to build bridges with people that otherwise will never felt the need to interact. I also see how important is for a multicultural teacher to foster Social and emotional learning because our students need this essential skills to interact with others different from them, to show empathy for others and to have positive relationships.

I think I will try to give them more examples and also to have some entrepreneurship visiting the classroom y also will like to invite someone from Ashoka Mexico to encourage the students and to give feedback on their projects also tried to contact with other high school abroad doing a K2A project in order to have involve some Connective Multicultural Learning activity on which students an interchange their own experience in their country.

For me as a teacher this was the first time I use the Design Thinking model, normally I teach the class Critical Thinking for 11 grade and I realized you have to follow a series of steps in order to be successful in this project based experience, it is really important to help students to build up ideas and to brainstorm, but at the stage everything is on paper and students will have to go out and reach out to the community to come out with a prototype and to implement the project. At the beginning as a rookie I believed that the most difficult part for my students was to implement the project but actually for them was most difficult to come up with ideas at the beginning of the first stage and to come up with possible solutions, because the ones they started working with their project outside of the classroom they really got engaged and wanted to have positive results.

Citation


Ricardo Vieira, Ana Vieira, Pedro Vieira. Education for citizenship, development and sustainability: a critical look at the transfer of knowledge

The increasing complexification of contemporary societies, as a result of globalization processes, both invite uniformity and stimulate the defense of fundamentalist identities.

An education for multicultural citizenship is needed to construct individuals with plural identities capable of articulating local belonging with national and global belonging, and understanding their world as well as others, always dynamic and between cultures.

It is also crucial to think education not only as the engine of economic growth but fundamentally as a lever for human development.

Universities and schools in general, if they want to innovate and contribute to social and intercultural development, have to investigate and learn from local cultures before they want to teach them. Therefore, it has to consider the local knowledges and to build bridges between the local cultures and the hegemonic culture of each nation-state. In this sense, school cannot be inculcating a new order of life, economy, technology, culture, etc., out of context in relation to the environment and the community in which it operates.

In opposition, it is a transfer of knowledge that contributes more to rural exodus and massive emigration than to human and social development.

Keywords: development and sustainability; empowerment; Education for (Dis) involvement; socio-educational intervention; transfer of knowledge

Education: models for change

The late twentieth century was lavish in producing models of change and socio-educational intervention. Despite the announcement of the need for an education for human development that would go beyond growth and lead to the empowerment of learners, as the well-known report by Jacques Delors (Delors et al, 1996), which advocated education for 21st century based on four pillars: learning to know; learning to do; Learning to live together and with others; learning to be.
The almost 20 years we have already spent within the new century and the new millennium do not seem to have gone far beyond the speech and practice of education for economic purposes. It is urgent to change this focus and develop education for active citizenship and human development through an intercultural education.

Let us first look at some of the paradigms that marked the end of the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, the processes of change were based on an approach that became known as technological. The models already tried in industry and agriculture were transported to education (Huberman, 1983, 70). In an attempt to move from theory to practice, an intention more or less common to all models that point to educational changes, the introduction of school changes generally went through three phases: designing a project and planning its application; investigating ways to develop, evaluating and experimenting with it; disseminating and implementing it. Thus, social change and educational innovation with technological change were, in some way, identified.

In French-speaking culture, this model became known as the RDD paradigm (Recherche, Développement et Diffusion), in Spanish by IDD (Investigación, Desarrollo Y Difusión) and in English by RDD (Research, Development, and Dissemination). It presumed to be able to think about social and educational change for a more or less vast system, in an abstract way and applicable to all social, school institutions, in which the actors had to understand the new message and readjust their practices to the proposed external change. In education systems, in particular, teachers were conceived as passive and obedient agents and "it is thought that learning can be reduced to a set of tasks; these tasks can be identified as learning objectives and measured through “Objective” evidence. Teaching focuses on these concrete objectives, making use of techniques and materials that allow the best possible accomplishment of these tasks "(House, 1988, 10).

The educator was considered to be at the base of the educational hierarchy, as a mere executor and passive consumer of ideas produced by those who investigated. It was and still is sometimes. The reforms of the Portuguese educational systems, for example, were being presented to teachers as a legal building to be implemented, because the Law so ordered.

However, in the 1970s, it is realized that an innovation cannot succeed without dialogue, enlightened and interested involvement of all educational partners, and the person for whom education and/or intervention is addressed is taken into account. (Vieira, 2009). Little by little, the intention to build a new paradigm for building transformations and innovations is being
developed. Against the mechanistic and technological paradigm of which the RDD is perhaps the best-known example, a paradigm more linked to the confrontation and interaction of all the subjects involved in the social and educational processes emerges, from the protagonists linked to the conception of new ideas to those close to the implementation and those present on the ground (Vieira, 1999). There is talk, then, of a new approach usually called politics (House, 1988) or diplomatic.

It is considered that change is always the object of tensions, cultural shocks, and conflicts between the subjects who submit to it, as there is no unanimity of representations about the ideal to be pursued. It is believed, therefore, that cooperation should be negotiated between the protagonists of the educational process since it is likely to have clashes of ideas between intentions and practices and on the other hand in the way in which different subjects reinterpret them. In any case, it is believed that the debate will provide the discovery of alternatives and innovations appropriate to the local context. In school systems, the problem arises, precisely when there is difficulty in reaching consensus in this diplomatic interaction and negotiation, not only between parents and teachers, for example, but also between parents and teachers themselves, who sometimes have different positions about what it must be abandoned in terms of educational practices and what must be acquired or implemented (Silva and Vieira, 1996). And as Idália de Sá-Chaves says,

this process of trying to reach consensus, commitments, understandings, and participation is not easy. The "cultural gap" existing between the different participants proved to be extremely difficult to bridge. In the United States, Walcott (1977) shows through an anthroposocial analysis the cultural divergences between each of the elements of the group, each one having its representation of the world, its interpretation of the facts, its own culture. The attempt to reconcile the differences was often understood as an attempt to "acculturate" teachers, which explains a large number of resistance to the proposals. It is a matter of getting to grips with values, practices and specific knowledge, made definitive and almost immutable values. However, it was not only with individual resistance that the new paradigm conflicted. (Sá-Chaves, 1989, 24-25).

To implement a change conceived outside an institution or a social system, without communicating and discussing it with the subjects that inhabit them, is to run the risk of seeing and hearing your subjects saying "they don't know what is happening on the ground, they are in the offices ... ".

By the 1980s, it became more common to speak of a third paradigm called
Anthropological or Ecological. The innovation process is conceived as always the result of an
interaction between cultures. This approach is alerted to take into account not only the cultural
world of the social workers but also of all stakeholders in the social and educational process of
each group, institution or community. Huberman (1983) considers as a fundamental
characteristic of this model the fact that the change must be desired by the recipient himself,
who must contribute to its construction. It is considered necessary, by way of example, to
understand and apprehend each educational system, school or non-school, as a particularly
complex totality. We move towards the system's vision, not so much with a fixed structure that
we have to investigate to know how to implement it, but more as a process in constant
structuring, de-structuring, restructuring.

It is not, however, an absolutely new view on the processes of change. Anthropology
has always considered social systems as carriers of culture. It is a model that has been taken up
by the educational sciences and the social sciences, and, indirectly, conceived and manipulated
by the decision-making bodies of educational changes. Even so, it remains an unfamiliar model
or, at least, much less known than the technological and political models.

Idália Sá-Chaves, who produced interesting work in Portugal on teachers and axes of
change, added that

[...] the anthropological approach, having a "shattered" view of society,
considering that there is a greater consensus between each group than
between groups, [...] leads to a concept of self-management in each, according
to their particular determinants and (1989, 26).

We would say that the anthropological perspective is aware not so much of a "shattered"
society, but, essentially, the existence of a heterogeneity of cultures in each society, which
implies a global and comprehensive approach to the phenomena, attitudes, and representations
of the different individuals, all of them also with a very personal culture. If you want to think
about changes to be introduced in school institutions, in groups or communities, it implies, first,
doing fieldwork and direct and participant observation to get to know the other with whom to
discuss and project new futures (Vieira, A. and Vieira, R., 2019). It implies gaining conscience
that the human and social sciences and educational sciences, which we include in the first,
cannot establish general and universal laws, because the phenomena are historically and
culturally conditioned (Vieira, 1999). It involves thinking about carrying out case studies, in
specific contexts (Caria, 2003), and not just in an abstract, model and monocultural system, since, in fact, it is always diversified and very multicultural (Vieira, 2009).

Anthropological work on issues of social change dates back a long time. House (1988, 13) mentions two aspects: that of cultural materialism and that of multiculturalism. In the first, it integrates the relativistic current for which cultural change has to do with “a tradition or history of culture” and the evolutionist who, as we know, conceived change through an unilinear model of development.

The evolutionist model dates back to the 19th century and was based on a conception of development and universal evolution. However, criticisms of evolutionism forged the model of multilinear evolutionism (Shalins and Service, 1960; White, 1969) that supposes an ecological view (ecology - cultural) of social systems and that “adapting to the environment intensifies cultural change” (House, idem, 14).

In the second aspect - multiculturalism - referred by House, it is considered that a society does not correspond to a single culture, but rather to a plurality and that “to account for a change, it is necessary to recognize the differences between these subcultures, in which individuals learn to orient themselves”.

In summary, and despite the very different classifications attributed to the models of implementation of changes and innovations, there is more or less consensus that the technological, modeled on the industry, as mentioned, focuses innovation on its characteristics and on the methodology (technology) of how to introduce it, neglecting the understanding of the target audience. There is a structured and detailed planning and a concern to reduce heterogeneities. It is accepted that the diplomatic or political, attends a lot to the context and the relations between hierarchically superiors and inferiors and that, therefore, the planning is flexible and negotiable. The project is here attentive to the conflicts and interests of the subjects involved. Finally, the anthropological, cultural or even ecological approach, not only emphasizes the context and the structuring of work in the system, but also the way in which individuals conceive and interpret innovation and, therefore, meanings and values. The design of the project is constructed throughout the work; innovation takes into account the cultural interests and needs of the actors involved and resistance phenomena are analyzed and valued (Cortesão, 1990).

It is within this anthropological perspective that, in part, a new way of doing research has emerged, action research, closely associated with Social Work, and in particular with Social
Education (Vieira, A. and Vieira, R., 2019). The processes are naturalistic, insofar as they approach the real lived, and distance themselves from the quantitative methods that ratify the positivism that is also conveyed by the technological paradigm, seeking to understand the set of factors in interaction in a given situation, as well as the different representations that they have the different individuals with whom the Social Worker, be it a Social Educator, a Social Assistant, an Animator, or a teacher, will work.

**Citizenship education and local / global articulation: diagnose, plan, execute and evaluate with the entire educational community**

The increasing complexification of contemporary societies, as a result of globalization processes both invite uniformity and stimulate the defense of fundamentalist identities, the cultural frontiers, as Barth (1969) explained in Ethnic groups and boundaries. “It is increasingly clear that the replacement of the static approach by the interactionist one, concerning ethnicity, brings about a similar change in the study of culture, affirming Barth that the book *Ethnic groups and boundaries* implies a postmodern notion of culture (Vermeulen and Govers, 2004, 11).

And it becomes more and more difficult to manage diversity in this complex interactionist game because

“It also creates, in those who live it or try to manage it, a range of contradictory tensions, in a context of complete change. [...] The individual feels confused, given the complexity of the modern world, which changes the references to which he was accustomed. [...] Contemporary Man is in danger of facing the developments that operate beyond the borders of his immediate belonging group as threats and, paradoxically, being tempted, by an illusory feeling of security, to close in on himself, with possible consequences in the rejection of the other ”(Delors, J. et all, 1996, 41).

This is why an education for multicultural (Souta, 1997), glocal (Robertson, 1992) citizenship is needed to construct subjects with plural identities (Lahire, 2002) capable of articulating local belonging with national and global belonging, and understanding their world as well as others, always dynamic and between cultures (Vieira, 2009; 2014).
Contemporary educational processes must, in addition to the dimensions of technical training and a more cognitive nature, also reinforce reflexivity on the complexity of identity processes (Vieira, 2014) and on the need to learn to affirm not only the difference that separates us from others but, above all, the similarity that can unite us for the construction of intercultural bridges (Vieira, R. and Vieira A. 2017) and for the construction of societies that are more hospitable and better able to put pedagogies of how to live together (Jares, 2007). It is up to education to

“A special responsibility in building a more supportive world, and the Commission thinks that education policies must make that responsibility very clear. It is, in some way, a new humanism that education must help to be born with an essential ethical component, and a wide space dedicated to knowledge and respect, of cultures and spiritual values of different civilizations, to counterbalance a globalization in which only economic or technical aspects are observed. The feeling of sharing common values and destiny is, in the final analysis, the foundation of any international cooperation project” (Delors, J. et all, 1996, 43-44).

It is also up to the school, more than educating and preparing for the exclusive activity in an insularized local community, to teach learning to learn and to encourage emancipation and autonomy. In the words of Guilherme de Oliveira Martins,

“To talk about Education as a citizenship priority is not to repeat a commonplace but to appeal to learning as a factor of emancipation, freedom, and responsibility. Educating, in the sense of the Greek paideia and the Latin humanistas, is, therefore, to correspond to the changes and challenges of the society of culture, in which it is important to laboriously build personalities and projects and awaken consciences for autonomy and for the capacity to respond, by knowledge, the call of others to be led to understand the world concerning those who challenge us ”(Martins, 2009, 49).

In this line of local / national / global intercultural dialogue, and in search of a socio-educational intervention, Glória Perez Serrano's book (2008) is structured around four elements to elaborate a project (diagnosis, planning, application-execution, evaluation). Regarding social diagnosis and finding needs, the author criticizes the imposing social intervention and reiterates the need for social pedagogy and intercultural mediation, to obtain the real needs of the other (Vieira, A. and Vieira, R., 2016):
The project must be based on a real need for which a solution is to be found and, also, that this can be solved with the collaboration of all. It is convenient to study the needs and resources that we have, both personal and material, to meet the needs realistically. We understand by necessity a discrepancy between the existing situation and the desired situation, that is, the distance between what is and what should be [...]. At this moment, the project's creator is looking for a way to ensure that the Social Project does not start from the top (project planners, the Administration), but that it gives way to the situation itself as a framework for disseminating the conditions and the guiding purposes of the Social Action. In other words, it seeks to favor that projects are not merely imposing, allowing them to appear spontaneously (Perez Serrano, 2008, 31).

Isabel Guerra (2002), on the other hand, seeking to characterize the foundations and processes of a sociology of action and planning in social sciences shows how the new “social problems” lead to a search for the academy to help in its intervention/resolution, a perspective which remains less developed than scientific production on the theoretical frameworks - on social exclusion and marginality, changes in the types and functions of families, youth and their expectations, etc. - evolve faster than the methods of analysis and intervention, which have stabilized around traditional methodologies, mainly document analysis, observation, questionnaire, and interviews. We desperately lack methods to support research and intervention in new professional fields (Guerra, 2002, 51).

This author sees action-research as a way to articulate theory and action, research and intervention “which associates with the act of knowing the intention to bring about social change” (idem, 51). He considers that there is nothing very new in action-research, concerning the paradigms of the social and human sciences, “since in most cases it uses traditional methodological procedures, but it is above all its attitude towards knowledge and action that puts in such a problematic and critical dimension ”(idem, 53). Isabel Guerra is well aware, throughout this work, about the role of the researcher who “is not a mere observer, but a supporter of the persons involved in the action” (idem, 54).

Also for Isabel Guerra “a good diagnosis guarantees the adequacy of responses to local needs and is fundamental to guarantee the effectiveness of any intervention project” (idem, 131) since any intervention needs to have a good information base, collected from diversified sources that the author correctly refers to as being from sources exogenous to the place, but also from “endogenous information of a quantitative and/or qualitative character” (ibidem). Thus, it calls for ethnographic work and direct or participant observation for the construction of the diagnosis,
which is not a simple “monograph” but which “harmoniously integrates the quantitative elements collected and the qualitative elements that come, whether from the field experience, either from the target population itself (ibidem).

For this author, the diagnosis, although it can be presented in different ways, is structured in four phases of the project:

The first phase of the construction of the project is the emergence of a collective will for change and the finding of resources (human, material, symbolic, etc.) capable of supplying sufficient energy to set up the project. The second phase, on which the entire project is based, is the situation analysis and the diagnosis. The third phase can then be considered as the design of the action plan and, finally, the fourth phase refers to the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project.

Obviously, in real life, these phases interpenetrate and, for example, the diagnosis is often already an intervention, and the evaluation is a permanent process that accompanies the execution itself. (Guerra, 2002, 127).

It is quite clear here the idea that the diagnosis is neither neutral nor objective as it implies the entry of the researcher into the field, which, in this sense, when questioning the world of those who live “the social problems” to intervene is no longer just to investigate, to produce knowledge about others as well as to intervene (Vieira, 2003; Caria, 2003). However, it is not entirely clear whether the author refers to an investigation of the context and people or, as we have argued, an investigation of the people in the context to intervene (Vieira, A., 2016; Vieira, A., and Vieira, R., 2016; Vieira, A. and Vieira, R., 2019), although, when initially referring to action-research techniques, affirm that “knowledge is produced in confrontation with the trying to transform it, and social knowledge is produced collectively by social actors deconstructing the role of “specialist” normally assigned to the social scientist” (Guerra, 2002, 75).

**Education for (reducing involvement) (dis) involvement: a mediating and empowering socio-educational intervention**

The second half of the twentieth century was a time of economic growth unprecedented in human history, a consequence of scientific development and productivity education. As Caride, Freitas and Vargas (2007, 9) remind us,
“At the United Nations General Assembly, held in 1996, the Declaration on the Right to Development insisted on defining development as “a global, economic, social, cultural and political process that tends towards the constant improvement of the well-being of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in their own development and the fair distribution of the benefits derived therefrom”.

These goals are denied by the capitalist model, whose neoliberal production and consumption systems, besides accelerating the destructive appropriation of the planet, add risks of political instability, marginalization and social segregation.”

Indeed, the development model based solely on economic growth has been very uneven and “the rates of progression are very different according to the countries and regions of the world” (Delors, 1996, 61).

That is why it is crucial that we think of education today not only as the engine of economic growth but fundamentally as a lever for human development. "Some countries, unable to participate in the international technological competition, will be ready to constitute pockets of misery, despair, and violence impossible to reabsorb through assistance and humanitarian actions" (idem, 65).

That is why UNDP (United Nations Development Program) proposed in its first Human Development Report in 1990, that human well-being should be considered as the purpose of development and development indicators should also include data on health, food and nutrition, education and the environment, equality between social and gender groups, and level of democratic participation.

Also the concept of,

““Sustainability ”complements that of human development, by emphasizing the long-term viability of the development process, the improvement of the conditions of existence for future generations, as well as respect for the natural means on which life depends in the world” (Delors, 1996, 71).

For this reason, Caride, Freitas, and Vargas (2007, 10), argue that “education and development are processes and realities that are intrinsically linked, to the point that Education without Development and Development without Education cannot be conceived”.

That is why it is essential to educate also for sustainability. For development and sustainability.
Moreover, without endogenous development, made from the needs listed with the populations and without sustainability and respect for different cultures, there is no true development. On the contrary, there is involvement, continuous dependence on foreign aid, as opposed to autonomy and social balance. Social segregation is another consequence when society doesn’t include different cultures within themselves, that would be the real social inclusion.

Still in the words of the report coordinated by Jacques Delors (1996, 74-75), “education is not only used to provide qualified people to the world of economics: it is not intended for human beings as an economic player but as the ultimate end of development”. Education serves to empower, help understand ourselves and others, and to mediate more local and global knowledge and values.

Somehow, in the socio-educational intervention modalities mentioned in the previous points, a model of social intervention was essentially underlined, often based on an idea of social pathology, starting from diagnosed “social problems”, which persists, even today, in seeing the difference as a disability and, therefore, to pathologize the socio-cultural heterogeneity (Vieira A., 2016; Vieira A. and Vieira R., 2016) that we call biomedical (Neri, 2004).

However, little by little, another model of intervention in social work emerges, more hermeneutic (Vieira et al., 2018) that prioritizes the point of view of the situation of the person being intervened from which the social worker makes an intervention socio-educational as we will explain below.

The biomedical paradigm does not only begin from a diagnosis so often made only from the outside, from the perspective of the specialist, who lists needs without the necessary active listening of those involved (Vieira, A. and Vieira, R., 2016 and Vieira, R. and Vieira, A., 2106), as well as, sometimes, in some projects, the last stage is called, using medical language, “end of treatment”: “the method was divided into several phases or stages - study (or research) of the situation, social diagnosis, treatment, evaluation and end of treatment ”(Robertis, 2011, 65). Like the doctor who studied biology, physiology and pathology, who knows the body, its “normality” and its diseases from which it studied causes, symptoms, manifestations, and means of treatment, the classic social interventor has also been working on the notion of norm and deviation, from which, once the diagnosis is made, can prescribe an intervention with a view to solving social ills.
In this model, and like the doctor, for the social worker, it is a matter of “treating” a “social disease”. It is the one who is able to take answers or solutions, to take “remedies” to those who suffer from a lack or from social dysfunction. The "treatment" is "prescribed" by the person who can define the social "diagnosis", the evil from which the other suffers. The social service then tries to establish types of diagnosis and systematize the responses (treatments) that are capable of resolving each type of social “disease” (Robertis, 2007, 66).

Social intervention, whether more preventive and transformative or, on the contrary, more resolutive, can, and should, whenever possible, have a practice fueled by mediation, that is, by communication, negotiation and not by the imposition of a single model and philosophy of life. In this sense, we refer to mediation as an area and a set of competences that span several professions, such as a hermeneutic philosophy, interpersonal and intercultural communication, as a systematic translation of the parties' interests in interaction and by the will of those involved. As highlighted by Torremorell (2008, 85), in

[...] An attempt to work with the other and not against the other, looking for a peaceful way to face conflicts in an environment of growth, acceptance, learning and mutual respect. [...] But, from a broader conception, we consider that “the culture of mediation configures ternary communicational spaces in which, with the contribution of the mediating person, subject agents generate shared symbolic horizons.

In mediating between different cultural values, the social worker/educator emerges as a mediator between social groups and the most diverse public and private institutions, relying on a multtopic hermeneutics [diatopic in the words of BS Santos, 1997] with a view to the realization of rights and interests of the groups and subjects concerned in the interaction. The purpose of the mediation process is to seek the autonomy of these groups and people [empowerment]. It is a socio-educational and mediating intervention. This exists from the first contact: the look, the welcoming, the way of presenting, the quality of the listening and the questions asked already change anything, change the image that the person has of himself and his surroundings and introduce new data in the present situation. Social intervention is implemented immediately without waiting for the preliminary data collection steps and without the social worker having time to get to know people and situations in depth. [...]
The position of the social worker is no longer that of the person who knows, who will bring the medicine, who will heal. He became the one who will discover an unknown situation, who will examine this reality with the interested parties, who will ask them to find the most suitable situations and who - throughout this process - will introduce changes and he will find himself modified itself thanks to an exchange process (Robertis, 2011, 67).

On the other hand, as already mentioned, the model of socio-educational intervention does not start from what is considered pathological, but, rather, from the existing positive and dynamic elements, whether in an intervention with individuals, with families or with groups. Intercultural mediation, already mentioned, appears as a paradigm distinct from the resolution and essentially based on communication and relationship between people and groups. In this new social work paradigm, “there is a conception of the role of the social worker as an “agent of change” (personal or individual changes, family changes or social changes). The goal of change replaces the curative, preventive and promotional goals of the medical model” (idem, 68).

**University Extension and “Transfer Of Knowledge”: A Critical Look**

As an example of the dubious investment of some universities for development, we recall that it is common to hear that the functions of universities are like a tripod based on teaching, research and extension.

In fact, none of these dimensions can work in isolation. Let us think for a moment about the “extension” conveyed by ideological and political speeches eager to show the applicability of university knowledge as if it were a system of communicating vessels. We are talking about a full head that pours knowledge to empty minds, to remind Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) or Paulo Freire (1921-1997).

The pride of some polytechnic and university deans emerges, who, probably unaware of the differences between knowledge and the process of knowing, are proudly discursive of their valences and knowledge transfer offices. They firmly believe that knowledge is produced, stored, and then simply sold, delivered to communities and society to update, transform, and modernize.

As Dewey (1933) said, knowledge is external but the act of knowing, this, is internal and implies a work of appropriation, of self-construction on a cultural background of knowledge and meaning. This implies a bilateral work of intercultural mediation between the educational.
institution and the subjects, groups or communities. This implies attachment and not a simple extension assuming a reception with a sense for the target audience. The idea of knowledge transfer as a passage from an object from place A to place B is simplistic and makes no sense for human (dis) involvement. This subject is very present in the entire work of Paulo Freire in the boldness of building pedagogies of autonomy. In his 1969 book [Extension or communication], Paulo Freire had already proposed the term of communication as marking a biunivocal, interactive and mediating dimension, necessary for development, unlike the extension that refers to monist, mechanistic, unidirectional and imposing relationships. Asymmetric relations of superiority of knowledge self-affirmed by those who deliver and of cultural inferiority postures of those who receive, a heteroconstructed inferiority by the cultural invaders equipped with the neutrality and objectivism of neopositivism incorporated in the magic coaching formulas to change the world with which some technocrats, engineers, managers, and politicians invade the specificity of the epistemology of the social sciences, perhaps without realizing it.

Universities need to enolve all these cultures to operate social change and social innovation, and not only transfer knowledge like an inanimate object.

People and communities need to understand and appropriate the knowledge for universities to their own local knowledge.

**In conclusion, an education for (dis) involvement is crucial.**

Given the classic model of social intervention that starts from the diagnosis to solve social problems, approaching the work of the doctor, which is why it is so often classified as a biomedical paradigm, an alternative model emerges today, more concerned with citizenship, with contextualized change and transformation. This new model, interested in the education and autonomy of the persons, groups and communities involved, here called socio-educational intervention, is based, fundamentally on social pedagogy and intercultural mediation. This model implies thinking about education for (dis) involvement, not for involvement.

The diagnosis is replaced here by an analysis of the situation, requested by the individuals and/or groups to intervene, or by someone else, a self and hetero evaluation that is made from the first contacts between the interveners and those intervened in a very informal and involved way. The social worker and all the social interventors that are part of the paradigms of socio-educational social intervention, emphasize their action with and for others, in caring for others.
and with others. This care, this help, can never be imposed and will always need the will and action of the users for their success and of the interventor.

It is urgent not only to change the practices of the relationship between universities and their surroundings, but also the speeches themselves, starting with the name of the things that mirrors the dominant philosophy in the materialization of the referred university tripod, increasingly formulated in the 21st century, of innovation [which they call social innovation, sometimes confusing it with technological innovation]. Therefore, the dialogue between universities, local communities and knowledge is essential to have a real development that is always local and global, sustainable and human, and producer of social inclusion. We need to learn how to live together.

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Sanja Španja and Ana Kurtović. Assessing the relation between intercultural sensitives and personality traits in high school teachers in the city of Vukovar, Croatia

The goal of this empirical research was to examine the interdependence between intercultural sensitives and personality traits. This research was conducted with teachers (N=172) from all secondary schools in the city of Vukovar, Croatia. Taking into account previous researches and the fact that, in the post-war community, the ethnic division is evident in all aspects of social life including education. The pupils in Vukovar attend separate classes divided according to ethnicity, and the curriculum is provided in Croatian or Serbian language (Corkalo, Ajdukovic, 2007). The division of classes, 90s war, as well as ongoing ethnic intolerance, create a challenging situation with regard to intercultural sensitivity in teachers. For that reason, it was important to examine teachers’ intercultural sensitivity, as well as its association with personality traits. An intercultural competent teacher is the one who is successful in the communicative transformation from monoculture to multicultural person. In order to achieve that, the authors suggested that teachers need to develop a new set of skills with already developed awareness towards culturally different groups taking into account the personality traits of teachers. As a measure of intercultural sensitivity, The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS by Chen and Starosta, 2000) was used, and Big Five Inventory (BFI by Benet-Martinez and John, 1998) was used to assess personality traits. The results have confirmed significant associations between intercultural sensitivity and personality, namely a negative correlation with neuroticism and positive correlations with conscientiousness and agreeableness. It seems that teacher who is more emotionally stable (low neuroticism), who are responsible and efficient in their responsibilities, as well as friendly and compassionate toward others, tend to be more interculturally sensitive. Therefore, our results suggest that, while intercultural sensitivity does depend on environmental factors, personality factors should be considered in both examining and promoting intercultural sensitivity.

Keywords: Personality, intercultural sensitivity, high school, teachers

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous challenges to the educational system today, one of them is to enable the development of positive attitudes and outlooks on diversity. Contemporary teachers need to be
trained to respect the richness of the diversity of cultures and to support them in the acquisition of skills to identify prejudices, take action to reduce and prevent all forms of discrimination wherever they encounter in the school system. The need to develop the intercultural sensitivity of teachers is reflected in the new tasks of teaching aimed at respecting, celebrating and recognizing diversity in all areas of human life. (Sablić, 2014: 9).

Teachers are extremely important in developing the intercultural sensitivity of their students because they are a role model and an example to students. By developing intercultural sensitivity, intercultural identity and intercultural communication, the student is more than ready to face the reality of the modern world. The skills and abilities that society brings, the school shapes, the teacher's transfer and the students adopt and use.

Intercultural attitudes and values of teachers certainly have a significant impact on the day-to-day education at all levels of education. Taking into account the arguments of life in the globalization "village", the great migration waves, the rapid changes in the society, they point to the need to raise awareness of the role of intercultural education in schools.

**INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Being successful in achieving quality relationships with people or groups that are culturally different from us depends not only on previous experience in contact with others but also on the competencies that the individual possesses. One of the important factors that enable us not only to learn and understand the other and the different from us but also about ourselves is intercultural competence (Bartulović, Kušević, 2016). There are numerous international and European studies in the field of intercultural competence, both in terms of terminology, essential dimensions, as well as its models and instruments. In addition to successful communication, the basic requirements of intercultural competence become sensitivity and self-awareness, that is, understanding of the behaviour of others as well as their way of thinking and seeing the world (Piršl, 2007).

Intercultural competence is, therefore, a process of change through which the stranger develops the capacity to adapt to the new environment while changing his or her views and understandings in order to better understand and accept the elements of the host culture (verbal, non-verbal speech, behaviour, different customs, values, habits and worldviews). The processes of understanding and accepting another culture are a series of mutually aligned dimensions of personality such as attitudes, behaviours, and practical actions that can contribute to effective, professional work in a culturally pluralistic society. Personal attitudes, knowledge,
communication and personality development, as well as social relationships, are important elements that characterize intercultural competence.

**DIMENSIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

The cognitive dimension of intercultural competences encompasses knowledge of the world and within the world, with particular emphasis on multicultural societies in which different languages are used as the mother tongue, geographical, social and economic determinants, on the one hand, of the consequences of family and school education (and education) and, on the other, of the influence of the media, modern communication technologies, migration and travel. Part of the knowledge acquired is objective knowledge (for example, certain facts, numerical data, significant dates or knowledge of historical figures), while other knowledge arises as a consequence of an individual's personal experiences and as such varies from person to person.

The emotional dimension of intercultural competences is considered to be much more significant than the cognitive one because it develops from the beginning of an individual's life, but also because it encompasses the core values of each individual, primarily self-esteem and only perception as basic preconditions for curiosity, openness and a tendency to reject false assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes. It is precisely the rejection of prejudices and stereotypes that is one of the basic characteristics of an intercultural competent person. A significant part of the emotional dimension of intercultural competences also relates to intercultural sensitivity, which implies an individual's emotional sensitivity to persons of different cultural backgrounds, the ability to perceive and recognize the existence of different worldviews that allow one to accept and recognize one's own identity and one's cultural values, as well as cultural values and identities. (Sablic, 2014: 34)

The behavioural/communicative dimension of intercultural competences encompasses personal experience, the model of living, and the symbolic representations invoked by individuals and societies in relationships with others based on which they shape the understanding of the world and their behaviour.

According to Sablić (2014: 186) “the most important elements of intercultural competence are:

- Attitudes - Positive attitudes towards other cultures and acceptance of diversity
- knowledge - awareness of cultural diversity
- knowledge of important cultural elements: norms, customs, values, symbols
- communication - awareness and knowledge of the existence of different models of verbal and non-verbal communication
• "flexible" (open) identity - the ability to upgrade one's identity; openness and flexibility to different ideas, opinions, values and behaviour.
• successful interaction - the ability to establish good and promising relationships in a group.

INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY
Starting from the understanding that teachers' intercultural sensitivity is an essential part of their intercultural competence, on which the development of students' intercultural sensitivity largely depends, they should persist in their development to tolerate, accept and respect diversity as a richness and not interfere with interaction (Drandić, 2015).
According to the development model of intercultural sensitivity, the basic requirements of intercultural competence become sensitivity and self-awareness. Accordingly, intercultural sensitivity can be defined as the ability to perceive and recognize the existence of different worldviews that enables us to accept and acknowledge not only our cultural values but also the values of culturally different persons. Intercultural sensitivity implies the ability to recognize the existence of different worldviews that allow one to accept and acknowledge one's own identity and one's cultural values, as well as the cultural values and identities of members of other cultures (Hrvatić & Piršl, 2007).
The creator of the Intercultural Sensitivity Development Model (DMSI) is Milton Bennett (1986), according to which each successive level leads to greater sensitivity to cultural diversity. The more complex and frequent the experience with the culturally different, the greater / stronger the competence in intercultural relations. Although each level is determined by specific behaviours and attitudes, the DMSI model does not aim to change attitudes and behaviours but to make them aware.
The main concept behind Bennett's model is what he calls "awareness", that is, how one develops the capacity to recognize and live with diversity. "Awareness" refers to two phenomena: the first is that people perceive one thing in different ways; and others, that "cultures differ from one another in the way they maintain different patterns of differentiation, that is, worldviews." This second aspect relates to Bennett's view of culture as a way for people to interpret reality and for someone to view the world around them. This interpretation of reality, or worldview, is different from culture to culture.
Depending on how one perceives and understands the world, so will his or her behaviour. The first three levels of the model are ethnocentric (own culture is the benchmark for evaluating
other cultures) and the other three are ethnorelative (one culture is compared to other cultures). The goal of intercultural sensitivity is to bring the ethnocentric perspective into the level of ethnorelative vision of the world.

**STAGES OF ETHNOCENTRISM**

Bennett (2009) presented ethnocentrism as the stage where the person assumes that his / her worldview is the only reality.

To deny the basis of an ethnocentric view of the world means that one denies that there are different views of reality in the world. This denial can be based on isolation when there has been little or no opportunity to confront different opinions when there is no such experience. Denial can also be based on separation, where differences are deliberately separated and the individual or group intentionally sets up barriers between people so that they do not confront their differences. Therefore, separation at least for a moment acknowledges the existence of diversity and is therefore developmentally above isolation. Racial segregation, which is currently still present in the world, is an example of separation. Members of oppressed groups tend to "skip" (not experience) the phase of denial, as it is almost impossible for them to negate the existence of diversity since it is precisely their diversity or a different view of the world that is negated.

As the second phase, Bennett describes the defence phase. Cultural differences can be seen as threatening because they offer an alternative to one's view of reality, that is, one's identity. That is why, in the defence phase, diversity is recognized, but it is fought against.

The most established strategy of this fight is disparagement, where a different view of the world is judged negative. Stereotyping and its extreme form, racism, are examples of derogatory strategies. The other side of disparagement is superiority, where only the positive features of one's own culture are emphasized, while other cultures are given little or no importance, which implies their lower value. Sometimes a third strategy is introduced in response to the threat of contact for diversity. It’s also known as a "phase of boredom."

**STAGES OF ETHNORELATIVITY**

For Bennett (2009), the basic assumption in ethno-relativism is that culture can only be understood in its relation to other cultures and that a given individual’s behaviour can only be understood in a cultural context. In the phase of ethno-relativism, diversity is no longer seen as a threat but as a challenge. At this stage, attempts to devise new types of mutual understanding override the tendency to preserve old patterns (Sablić, 2014).
Ethno-relativism begins with the acceptance of cultural diversity. This acceptance, first, begins by accepting the view that there are different modes of verbal and non-verbal communication in different cultures, and that all these ways deserve respect. Then, this acceptance is extended to include different worldviews and different values. This involves, first and foremost, knowing one’s own values and viewing those values as products of one own culture. Values can be explained as a process and a means of interpreting the world around us, but rather as something that someone “owns”. Even values that affect the disparagement of a particular group can be seen as having a function to assist the holders of those values in organizing the experience and understanding of the world in which they live, which of course does not preclude our critical thinking about these values.

Adaptation is the next stage in embracing cultural differences. Adaptation is the opposite of assimilation because assimilation involves assuming different values, worldviews and behaviours at the expense of giving up one's identity. Adaptation, in turn, is the process of adding and supplementing. It is learning a new way of behaving more in line with different worldviews and adding to the personal repertoire of behaviour. This is most clearly seen in the adoption of new styles of communication. In this context, culture is seen as something static, but rather a process that develops and has its course.

One of the most important elements of adaptation is empathy. Empathy is explained as the ability to experience situations different from those that are in line with our cultural identity. It is an attempt to understand someone else by occupying his position.

In the phase of pluralism, empathy is enhanced and the individual may rely on several different frames of reference or multiple cultural frames. It is often necessary for a person to live in a different cultural context for a long time to develop these frameworks. Diversity is then viewed as a normal part of a personal identity that is composed of two or more cultural frames.

The last of a series of stages Bennett (2009) calls integration. Since there are several different cultural frameworks in one person during the adaptation phase, the integration phase implies an attempt to integrate different cultural views into one. This does not constitute a re-establishment of one culture or the satisfaction of having a peaceful coexistence between different worldviews. Integration requires a continuous rethinking of personal identity in relation to the experience we develop through life. It can lead to an individual being integrated into the community but not belonging to any culture.

Contextual assessment, as the first stage of integration, denotes the ability to view different situations and worldviews from different cultural contexts. At all other stages, assessment is avoided to avoid ethnocentric evaluation. At the stage of contextual assessment, an individual
may depend on the circumstances, move from one cultural context to another. The assessment thus performed has the quality of relativity. Bennett (2009) gives an example of an intercultural choice: “Is it good to talk openly about the mistakes you or someone else made? In the context of American culture, this is good, while in most cases it is not. However, sometimes it is good to switch approaches and take advantage of the US approach in Japan and vice versa. The ability to use both styles is part of adaptation, while the moral appreciation of the cultural context when choosing is part of the integration.”

Bennett (2009) explains the last phase as constructive marginalization as something to be achieved, but not as the end of learning. For an individual, this implies a state of complete self-realization, not belonging to any culture where he/she becomes an outsider. Reaching this stage enables true intercultural mediation and the ability to act indifferent, culturally shaped, worldviews. Intercultural learning is a process characterized by constant progress (with the ability to move back and forth) and that, in the process, it is possible to measure the degree of intercultural sensitivity that an individual has achieved. One may wonder if the process of intercultural learning has to have this sequence of steps, where each step is a prerequisite for achieving the next. If we look at this model not only as a series of complementary stages but as different strategies - which, in the face of diversity, appropriate circumstances and capabilities, may be applicable, it can help us to discover the basic obstacles in that time and effective solutions for intercultural learning.

Ethnorelative levels (acceptance, adaptation, integration) emphasize the importance of the existence and understanding of cultural diversity, aligning the power of seeing with the views of others, and integrating significant elements in the diversity of one's own, personal identities. The goal of this model is to increase the individual awareness of each individual and make him/her intercultural sensitive when in a situation with persons from other cultures. One such environment is the school where teachers meet with culturally different students. With the arrival of culturally different students, the school faced one of the most significant changes in its history that marked the transition from unity to monocultural culture and the state in a culturally plural environment.

PERSONALITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

With the increase in a number of students from different cultures, the school have become multicultural, which made intercultural competence an important aspect of teaching and drew attention to factors that might determine teacher's intercultural competence. Most of the research and theory on cultural competence has revolved around situational and social factors,
while far less attention has been given to personal factors. Authors agree that personality traits, that underlie social behaviour and adaptation, are important in determining one’s intercultural competence because they affect one’s social, end therefore intercultural learning as well. One’s personality is defined in many ways, but the broadest definition would be that it is a combination of relatively stable characteristic, that determine the way a person thinks, feels and behaves across different situations. One of the most prominent theories of personality is the Big five personality theory (Costa & McCrae, 1976), which describes five broad personality dimensions; neuroticism/emotional stability, extraversion/introversion, agreeableness, openness (to experience) and conscientiousness.

Neuroticism refers to a continuum from emotional stability (low neuroticism) to emotional instability (high neuroticism). High neuroticism is associated with greater frequency and intensity of unpleasant emotions, higher emotional reactivity, irritability, poor impulse control and tolerance to frustration. People low in neuroticism tend to be more emotionally stable and resilient (Costa & McCrae, 1976). Neuroticism has been linked to lower intercultural competence in some studies (e. g. Wilson et al, 2013), but there are also studies that have not found significant relations (Novikova et al., 2017).

Extraversion is characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, higher levels of emotional expressiveness, and a general tendency to experience pleasant emotions, especially in social situations. People who are high in extraversion are, usually, outgoing and tend to gain energy in social situations. People who are low in extraversion – introverts prefer solitary activities, small gatherings, have fewer social contacts, require solitude, peace and quiet to „recharge” (Costa & McCrae, 1976). Some studies have linked extraversion with greater intercultural competence (Azandipour, 2019; Wilson et al., 2013).

Agreeableness is a dimension most often associated with social skills and success in relationships. People high in this dimension have very good social skills and the capacity for empathy. They tend to put a high value on relationships and invest a lot in them. They are kind, cooperative, caring and exhibit prosocial behaviour. People who are low in agreeableness, on the other hand, tend to be more competitive and less concerned with the welfare of others (Costa & McCrae, 1976). There are studies linking agreeableness and intercultural competence (Huang et al, 2005; Chan & Sy, 2016). However, there are also studies that suggest that agreeableness is related to ambivalence about multicultural distinctions and the tendency to emphasize cultural differences (Novikova et al, 2017).
Openness (to experience) is a dimension characterized by creativity, imagination, and love of novelty, both in learning and experiencing. People high in openness tend to have a broad range of interests and be rather curious and adventurous, as well as open-minded and tolerant of differences. People low in this dimension, on the other hand, tend to be much more traditional, rigid in thinking, and have difficulty assuming different perspectives (Costa & McCrae, 1976). Not surprisingly, openness has shown to be related to intercultural competence in studies examining its relations between personality dimensions (Chan and Sy, 2016; Wilson et al, 2013; Novikova et al, 2017).

Finally, conscientiousness is characterized by thoughtfulness, good impulse control, responsibility, goal-directed behaviours. Highly conscientious people tend to be organized, thorough, efficient and mindful of details. However, people extremely high in conscientiousness tend to be overly cautious, rigidly moral, and overly self-disciplined (Costa & McCrae, 1976). As with other dimensions, there are studies linking conscientiousness with higher intercultural competence (Shaffer et al. 2006; Chan and Sy, 2016).

Even though individual differences in personality factors, which can explain differences in intercultural competence have been somewhat neglected, there is sufficient evidence suggesting that personality plays an important role. Personality dimensions are largely biologically determined and relatively stable, and as such, they can be viewed as a personal predisposition to reacting a certain way in intercultural situations. However, personality dimensions or their expressions are amenable by learning, meaning that, with appropriate support, one can develop characteristics that facilitate intercultural competence and ameliorate ones that inhibit it. Therefore, it is important to examine the relations of personality dimensions with intercultural competence in order to gain insight into which personality aspects are most conducive to intercultural competence. The aim of our study was to examine the relations of the Big five personality dimensions in a sample of teachers in Vukovar in correlation with Intercultural sensitivities. In early 90 ties city of Vukovar situated in the eastern part of Croatia was severely destroyed in homeland war. Effects of that devastation were the number of Croats displaced murdered and still missing until today. Nowadays in Vukovar, there is a majority of citizens who are Croats and minority, Serbs. They are divided from kindergarten to high school to the segregated schools on Croatian language and letter and Serbian language and letter.

**METHODOLOGY**
Participants and procedure

A total of 159 high school teacher of different profiles participated in the study. The sample was a convenient sample composed of teachers from four high schools in Vukovar, Croatia. There were 48 male and 109 female teachers (and two teachers who did not indicate gender). Teachers differed greatly based on work experience, which ranged from 0 to 39 years of work experience. The study was conducted in respective schools. The questionnaires were left in school for teachers to complete them at their own convenience, after which they were to leave them in an envelope. The participants were made aware of the fact that the study is anonymous and confidential, as well as the results were going to be analyzed exclusively on a group level and be used for scientific purposes only.

Measures

The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS; Chen & Starosta, 2000) was used to measure intercultural sensitivity. In order to measure the dimensions of intercultural communication competence, Chen and Starosta (2000) first developed an instrument to explore the concept of intercultural sensitivity. The empirical construction and validation of the instrument of intercultural sensitivity were conducted in three stages. First, a pre-study was administered to generate items representing the conceptual meaning of intercultural sensitivity. Then, the model was tested by exploratory factor analysis. Finally, the concurrent validity of the instrument was evaluated. The five factors were labelled Interaction Engagement, Respect for Cultural Differences, Interaction Confidence, Interaction Enjoyment, and Interaction Attentiveness. The concurrent validity of the 24-item instrument of intercultural sensitivity was then evaluated against seven other valid and related instruments. The results were found satisfactory.

Big Five Inventory (BFI; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998) was used to measure the Big five personality dimensions. It is a 44-item questionnaire designed to measure dimensions of personality according to Big five model; neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness (McCrae & Costa, 1976). The participants are expected to answer to what extent they agree with a given statement about themselves (“I see myself as a person who…”) on a five-point scale (1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). The sample items for each dimension are; neuroticism “…Can be tense”, openness to experience “…Is curious about many different things”, conscientiousness “…Is a reliable
worker”, extraversion “…Generates a lot of enthusiasm” and agreeableness “…Is helpful and unselfish with others”. Higher values indicate more of each dimension. The internal consistency reliability coefficients in our study were .78 for neuroticism, .77 for openness to experience, .76 for conscientiousness, .76 for extraversion and agreeableness.

**Data analysis**

Data were analysed in SPSS 19.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive analysis was used to gain insight into levels of intercultural competence and personality dimensions. In order to examine the correlations between intercultural competence and personality dimensions, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated. In order to examine whether personality dimensions predicted intercultural competence, stepwise regression analysis (backward method) was used.

**Results**

Descriptive data are presented in table 1.

*Table 1. Descriptive data for intercultural sensitivity and personality*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Obtained range</th>
<th>Possible range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural sensitivity</td>
<td>99.02</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>47 – 118</td>
<td>24 - 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>19.81</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>8 – 39</td>
<td>8 - 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>23 – 49</td>
<td>10 - 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>34.54</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>20 – 45</td>
<td>9 – 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>28.59</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>15 – 40</td>
<td>8 - 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>34.00</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>17 – 45</td>
<td>9 - 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in table 1 teachers exhibit high intercultural sensitivity, with maximum values almost reaching the highest possible value. However, the minimum value suggests that there are teachers with low intercultural sensitivity. In order to get a better insight into the results regarding intercultural sensitivity, their distribution is shown in figure 1.
As can be seen in figure 1, the distribution of results on intercultural sensitivity is asymmetric (negative skew) confirming that the results are moved toward higher values. Majority of teachers (69.81%) scored from 87.39 to 110.65 (-1SD to +1SD), while 15.72% scored below 87.39. However, out of those, only one teacher's score is 47, while all others scored 72 or higher, which is in line with descriptive analysis suggesting that teachers show higher intercultural sensitivity.

In order to examine the relations between personality dimensions and intercultural sensitivity, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated. The results are shown in Table 2.

![Histogram](image)

**Figure 1. Distribution of intercultural sensitivity**

**Table 2. Correlation coefficients between personality dimensions and intercultural sensitivity.**
As can be seen in table 2, there are significant correlations between intercultural sensitivity and all of the Big five personality dimensions, and all are positive except with neuroticism. Therefore, teachers who are emotionally stable, open to experiences, conscientious, extraverted and agreeable also have higher intercultural competence. The highest correlations are with agreeableness and openness, followed by extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness.

In order to examine whether intercultural sensitivity could be predicted by personality dimensions, a stepwise regression analysis (backward method) was performed, with intercultural sensitivity as a criterion and personality dimensions as predictors. The results are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREDICTOR</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>2.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>2.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>3.90***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R=.49 R²=.23

*p<.05  **p<.01

Table 3. Results of stepwise regression analysis for intercultural sensitivity

As can be seen in table 3, agreeableness was the strongest predictor of intercultural sensitivity, followed by extraversion and openness with similar effects. The whole model explained 23% of the total variance of intercultural sensitivity.
Discussion

The aim of our study was to examine intercultural sensitivity and its relations with the Big five personality dimensions in high school teachers in Vukovar, Croatia. The results suggest a high level of intercultural sensitivity in high school teachers in Vukovar. Taking into account the events of past three decades in Croatia, as well as the continuing ethnic tension between Croats and Serbs in Vukovar and the utter lack of political will in ameliorating it, this results was rather unexpected. There is a number of possible explanations for this result. First, the possibility of socially desirable answering has to be taken into account, especially in sensitive subjects such as attitudes, ethnic and cultural issues. Second, it is possible that the animosities that exist between two main ethnic groups in Vukovar have led teachers to be relatively tired of it, and that our result suggests teachers inclination toward ethno-relativism and intercultural tolerance and acceptance as a way to a healthier society. Third, the fact that Vukovar has always been a multiethnic city, which has led to teachers to be more interculturally competent even though their experience is mainly associated with different ethnicity in the same culture. The result is in line with some studies demonstrating higher intercultural competence in people with a higher educational level, which is the case for teachers (Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2014).

The correlation analysis has shown that intercultural sensitivity is positively associated with agreeableness, openness, extraversion and conscientiousness, while it is negatively associated with neuroticism. The highest correlation was with agreeableness, which emphasizes the importance of social skills and empathy and is in line with some studies demonstrating a positive relation between agreeableness and intercultural competence (Wilson et al, 2013). People high in agreeableness usually have good social skills, empathy, and put a higher value on relationships (Costa & McCrae, 1976). It is not surprising that they would do so with people from different cultures, which suggests that agreeableness is an important factor determining teachers’ motivation to engage in interactions with people from different cultures. Furthermore, agreeable people, due to their higher empathy, are more likely to be sensitive to the fact that people from other cultures are a minority in their county and make an effort to welcome and understand them. Due to their social skills and empathy, they would probably be less apprehensive about cultural differences and their ability to interact successfully, meaning they would have less fear of the unknown. There are studies demonstrating the importance of agreeableness for intercultural competence, such as Huang et al (2005) and Chan and Sy (2016).
The correlation with openness (to experience) was the second-highest. The correlation was expected given the fact that openness is associated with the affinity for diversity. People high in openness accept and welcome diversity of any kind, and more than that, they would probably seek it. They are also more tolerant of ambiguity associated with the new and the unknown and have less fear of the unknown (Costa & McCrae, 1976), which understandably facilitates intercultural sensitivity because they are more likely to venture outside their comfort zone and experience new things. Furthermore, people high in openness are more flexible and open-minded and often rely on their own creativity (Costa & McCrae, 1976). Therefore, in interactions with people from different cultures, which would make teachers less worried about their skills or knowledge about other cultures and probably more inclined to engage in interactions. Finally, they like learning new things, which increases the probability that they would take the time to acquire knowledge about other cultures, which would make them more interculturally competent and successful in interactions. Indeed there are studies demonstrating a positive relation between openness/flexibility and intercultural competence (Chan and Sy, 2016; Wilson et al, 2013; Novikova et al, 2017).

The third highest positive correlation was with extraversion. Extraverted people are more sociable, assertive and talkative than introverted people, which makes them more confident in social situations in general (Costa & McCrae, 1976), and can also affect their confidence in intercultural communication. Extroverts prefer a lot of interaction and are prone to experiencing pleasant emotions in social situations, which increases the likelihood of interactions with people from different cultures and intercultural sensitivity. The results are in line with some studies demonstrating a positive relation between extroversion and intercultural competence. For example, Azandipour (2019), Huang et al (2005), Yashima (1995), and Wilson et al. (2013) demonstrated a positive relation between extroversion and competence in adjusting to different cultures.

A lowest positive correlation was with conscientiousness. Conscientious people are responsible and thoughtful, which makes them more likely to behave in a socially accepted way - display tolerance, sensitivity if they are valued in one’s environment. Some studies have also shown that conscientiousness is related to better intercultural competence because conscientious people are more likely to be committed to a task and meet job expectations even in times of personal or social crisis (Shaffer et al. 2006). There are also studies suggesting that people with ethnocentric orientation have the lowest conscientiousness compared to people with ethno-relative or neutral orientation (Novikova et al, 2017). This could suggest that even if they lack intercultural skills, and feel apprehensive about intercultural interactions, they would be willing
and eager to learn and adapt to a new social setting because they feel it is the right and responsible thing to do or that it is required of them in a given situation. Furthermore, conscientiousness may lead to a sense of personal responsibility for the individual rights of other people and make them more sensitive and mindful in intercultural interactions. Therefore, results do suggest that conscientiousness increases the likelihood of adopting intercultural values and becoming interculturally sensitive (Shaffer et al. 2006; Chan and Sy, 2016; Novikova et al, 2017; Wilson et al, 2013).

Finally, neuroticism was negatively correlated to intercultural sensitivity. People high in neuroticism have a tendency to feel unpleasant emotions, especially in new situations. They are more likely to feel fear of the unknown when encountering people from different cultures and have less confidence in communication with people from different cultures. When experiencing unpleasant emotions, such as anxiety or fear, they are less sensitive to others and their needs. They also have a tendency for irrational thought, which increases the likelihood that they would perceive intercultural situations, as well as have negative attitudes and prejudice. They are also more easily irritated, which would make them less tolerant of idiosyncrasies of different cultures, especially if they are very different from their own. There are few studies that have demonstrated significant relations between neuroticism and intercultural competence, and they have shown negative relations. For example, Wilson et al (2013) have shown that neuroticism is negatively associated with cultural competence, while Ward (1996, 2001) asserted that neuroticism is negatively related to the capability of coping with stress and challenges associated with intercultural interactions. Ang et al. (2006) have also demonstrated that neuroticism is negatively related to cultural intelligence, or the ability to learn new skills and behaviours, which are suitable for respective cultures, while Chan and Sy (2016) showed that emotional stability was positive related to self-efficacy in transcultural nursing functions in a sample of nursing students.

Lastly, stepwise regression analysis has shown that agreeableness, extraversion and openness predicted intercultural sensitivity, while neuroticism and conscientiousness did not have significant effects. With regard to agreeableness, the result is not surprising given its highest correlation with intercultural sensitivity in our study and the results of other studies linking it to greater social skills, empathy, social learning opportunities, expatriate performance and success and sociocultural adaptation (Sneed; 2002; Tams, 2008, Ones & Viswesvaran; 1997; Caligiuri 2000, Wilson et al, 2013). Extraversion and openness predicting intercultural sensitivity is also expected given the fact that people high in extroversion and openness are sociable, open-minded, socially competent and tolerant, all of which has been shown to be

Results of this and similar research have some important implications. First, they demonstrate that personality factors have to be taken into account in both studying and promoting intercultural competence. The results suggest that personality should be assessed at recruitment, whether in college or in applying for a job if we wish to encourage intercultural competence in teachers. Those assessments could be a useful guide to interventions aimed at improving intercultural competence so that they can be tailored to the individual needs of candidates. For example, students or teachers high in neuroticism might need interventions aimed at promoting coping with stress and fear of the unknown, or might need assistance in changing their irrational beliefs and perception of threat in intercultural situations. Individuals low in openness might need help with a tolerance of ambiguity, while the ones low in agreeableness might need social skills and empathy training. While knowledge is important, and interventions aimed at increasing knowledge about other cultures are useful, ignoring personality factors, which influence emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions across situations, could decrease the effectiveness of those interventions.

Finally, the results of our study should be viewed with respect to some limitations. First, the sample was a convenient one consisting of teachers in Vukovar, which could limit the possibility of generalization of results. The measures were self-report, which increases the likelihood of socially desirable answering, especially for Intercultural sensitivity scale. Finally, the design was correlational, which makes conclusions about causal relations unjustified.

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Ee Lin Lee. The (De)Construction of the Other Through International Volunteerism

Abstract

This study examines how the international volunteerism (IV) experience in Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar of college students permits meaningful intercultural exchange with their hosts. Using the politically responsive constructivist theory of communication, the study reveals that the volunteers’ discourse about the Other is a reproduction of the White American dominant cultural discourse about the Other. The participants’ (de)construction of the Other is hypothetical, acontextual, and politically correct, and therefore diminishes the voice of the Other while reinforcing an imagined race-neutral context in IV. Implications of the findings suggest the necessary interrogation of Whiteness in the current color-blind IV industry and recommend crucial education to prepare IV participants to engage in critical intercultural dialogue.

The (De)Construction of the Other Through International Volunteerism

Rooted in the service-learning curriculum, international volunteerism (IV) is a program based on experiential learning and curricular-driven reflections (Endres & Gould, 2009). These short-term programs, commonly 2-8 weeks long (Institute for International Exchange, 2018), aim to codify cross-cultural education as a basis for sustainable development through the global-local connection. Universities offer course credits for IV participation to engage student volunteers in global citizenship. The volunteers participate in various community-based projects (e.g., infrastructure development, ecological restoration, English language instruction, etc.) in a bid to transform underresourced communities and enhance the lives of those in need (Taylor, Glick, & Peikazadi, 2018).

Despite its image of promoting humanitarian activism (Kajner, 2018), IV carries with it the stigma of Western recolonization of former colonies. Since the mid-2010’s, researchers have cautioned against the global reification of Western power through IV (e.g., see Bandyopadhyay, 2019; McGehee, 2014)—a Western enterprise that traces its roots to colonial missionaries in the 1700’s. From a critical standpoint, what is left unsaid is the presumed superiority of the predominantly White volunteers, whose actions permeate the paternalistic relationships between the aid recipients and their benefactors (Mostafanezhad, 2013).
Moreover, the beneficiaries’ reliance on the gifter’s protection and guidance (e.g., for technological and lifestyle advancement) (Devereux, 2008) allows the West to justify not only expanding its power relations, but also defining the existential reality of the lesser Other (Conran, 2011).

Besides macro-level controversies, IV is also problematized by micro-level debates about the volunteers’ true intentions and actions. In fact, many volunteers use IV to accrue personal capital (e.g., to shed off the guilt of their privilege, to augment their career profiles, to use IV for fun and leisure, etc.) (Sin, 2009). The ultimate pursuit of self-growth while pretending to help those in need, thus, is incongruent with the volunteers’ role as altruistic change agents who genuinely enact social justice. Such a problematization of IV in the dominant discursive space of (White) academic circles attracts heavy criticism in critical studies of IV. While some critics fault critical studies for failing to effect practical solutions (see Wearing & McGehee, 2013), others argue that mutually beneficial relationships can be negotiated when volunteer-host power relations are equal and when the hosts are empowered (e.g., (McAllum & Zahra, 2017).

Thus far, scholars and practitioners are yet to sufficiently examine the communicative processes of IV that are specific to intercultural dialogue (ICD). As conceptualized in this study, ICD is communication across differences that is productive; it “produces something greater than the sum of its parts” (Simpson, 2008, p. 139). When exiting the communicative processes, the interlocutors are expected to leave as changed persons, since ICD allows them to challenge their own assumptions through juxtaposition with their “radical encounters with otherness” (Deetz & Simpson, 2004, p. 145). It is in the performance of discourse—the actual practice of communication and not just intention—that the highly nuanced social realities (e.g., assumptions, beliefs, taken-for-granted understandings of the world, etc.) lived by the interlocutors are teased out (Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2013; Philipsen, 1975). Consequently, the examination of IV discourse permits the understanding of the interlocutors’ embodiment of their experiences—specifically, their encounters with otherness.

The volunteers’ narratives, as catalogued in numerous studies, reveal that IV is a place where volunteers go to watch the Other and otherness (e.g., see Caton & Santos, 2009). Despite their stated desire to pursue touristic authenticity in IV—that is, exposure to unfiltered cultural experiences that permit a close-up look at foreign cultures and peoples (Conran, 2011)—the volunteers’ interpretation of authenticity does not always reflect a genuine understanding of the Other and otherness. Instead, the common lexicons they use in their narratives (e.g., poor, backward, dangerous, wild, exotic, etc.) conjure up stereotypical (Western) images of
developing countries (also see Said, 1978). As evidenced in the long history of Western literature, language used to describe the Other satisfies the need to see otherness in the Other (Said, 1978). Therefore, the volunteers’ description of the Other—what and how they talk about culturally different others—provides a rich source for analyzing and illustrating any assumptions they hold that are influenced by dominant ideologies.

Since IV is a heterogeneous space where volunteers adopt the transitory identity of tourist-volunteer, the volunteers’ radical encounters with otherness invoke in them a heightened sense of self and a contestation of their own social reality and understanding of the external world (Conran, 2011; Edensor, 2001). Thus, volunteer discourse about the Other and otherness in IV reveals their strategies for navigating a discursive space that spans color lines, languages, and national boundaries (as specific to this study). Since this discursive space is also suitable for interrogating the performance of potentially transformative ICD, this study asks:

*RQ*: How do the volunteers’ discourse about their (de)construction of their hosts model transformative ICD?

**IV Discourse in Politically Responsive Constructionism**

Transformative ICD is dialogue that permits voice; the participants are allowed to freely develop and express their own interests (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). The dialogue is historically situated, productive, engaging, empowering, transformative, explores different perspectives, and is politically responsive (Simpson, 2008). According to the politically responsive constructivist theory of communication (PRCT), dialogue is the process of thinking together with the Other, in which radical encounters with otherness suggest alternative understandings to the interlocutors (Gadamer, 1975). In the critical dialogic process, participants’ self-destruction supersedes self-expression (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). In responding to the demands of otherness, the participants’ assumptions are juxtaposed against alternative understandings in the dialogue. The exploration and negotiation of difference, thus, grant participants productive new understandings of the social world upon exiting the dialogue.

Social constructionists believe that language shapes and defines interlocutors’ social reality, and the PRCT asserts that “those with power to define language shape and constrain the discursive space” (Simpson, 2008, p. 141). Therefore, when the transformative potential of ICD is not realized, participants reproduce and perpetuate dominant ideologies. For many of the volunteers who engage in IV, participating in their hosts’ mundane lives is their first prolonged exposure to communicating with and living amongst the racially different Other away from
home. In fact, Whites in the U.S. generally enjoy the privilege of not having to consciously engage in racialized communication on a mundane basis (McIntosh, 1988; Moon, 2016).

Along with White privilege, the pervasiveness of White supremacist ideologies in the daily national discourse further shields Whites from the negative social consequences of racial inequities (e.g., living in poor neighborhoods with limited access to education and healthcare). The White dominant cultural script privileges meritocracy and believes that disadvantaged non-White minorities are responsible for their own plight. The script shifts the focus of interracial conversations away from Whiteness, which remains unquestioned, normalized, and taken for granted (Moon, 1999; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

For Whites, participation in ICD that is meaningful and productive is further hampered by White fragility—that is, the inability of Whites to address and critically reflect on racism and social injustices (DiAngelo, 2018). Therefore, the lack of genuine ICD opportunities is nothing new in U.S. higher education—an institution that is steeped in White macro-national culture and run by predominantly Whites (Lee, 2019). As such, the degree to which university curricula can prepare student volunteers to engage in transformative ICD in IV may be limited (Lee, 2018, 2019). However, this study hopes to show how student volunteers—a select group that is concerned with issues of social (in)justice and empathizes with the lesser other—can realize the transformative potential of ICD through the contestations of their own social reality (e.g., Whiteness, privilege, etc.).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The data for this study come from a larger project that examines the volunteers’ IV experience and impact of their sojourns on their personal growth. The participants (n\text{male} = 3; n\text{female} = 8) were full-time undergraduates enrolled at universities in the West Coast and Southwest U.S. They participated in either the Thai-Myanmar border program, which built shelters for Karen refugees, and/or the Mondulkiri and Siem Reap programs, which focused on elephant and turtle conservation and English language instruction. Both programs seek to promote social justice in Southeast Asia through community-based projects.

The participants gave consent, without compensation, to be audio-recorded for the 1-1.5 hour-long semi-structured interviews. The interview protocol was developed using Spradley’s (2016) ethnographic interview method to explore: (a) the participants’ descriptions of their motivation for participating in the program, (b) their expectations about the trip, (c) their understanding of the volunteer experience, and (d) the impacts of the experience on them.
Grounded theory approaches were used to analyze and code all transcripts. The researcher read all the transcripts multiple times using the constant-comparative method (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). In close readings of the transcripts, she paid particular attention to the interlocutors’ references to the self, the Other, the self-other connections and comparisons, and otherness (e.g., through lexicons such as I, we, the people, they, the Americans, Cambodians, their country, here, etc.) (also see Dyers & Wankah, 2012; Helleiner & Szuchewycz, 1997). Data were organized into meaningful segments and coded for emerging themes. Connections among themes were also sought and noted.

Iterations of coding were used to confirm the validity of data analysis. In particular, the researcher recoded the same transcript on separate days to confirm consistency. She also compared incident to incident, incident to theme, and theme to theme (Glaser, 1992). Moreover, she recruited two research assistants to read the transcripts to confirm consistency. The reported speech presented in the Findings section is edited minimally for clarity and readability.

**Findings**

The participants’ (de)construction of the culture and interactions with their hosts provides a window into the reproductive discourse of the White American dominant cultural narratives about and relating to the Other. Overall, the participants portray a simplistic and incomplete understanding of their hosts and their impoverished communities, lumping together and describing them as the “Third World”—a land of charming, resourceful people who live in happiness and harmony. The following subsections illustrate how such narratives fall short of transformative ICD.

**The Third World**

**Their Differences**

The participants’ narratives about the “Third World” are based on comparisons between their home culture and that of their hosts. Lexicons such as “culture,” “lifestyle,” and “way of living” are used to describe the differences the participants observed and their individual justification for the otherness. As presented in their narratives, culture is something that the hosts possess and display for their consumption. They also infer that the hosts’ foreignness is simply a function of their different outlook to life, stemming from their native cultures. Thus,
“Third World” “culture”—which the volunteers could easily observe, identify, and label—is “completely different from the United States.”

Tilly’s and Samantha’s narratives below illustrate this phenomenon. They use vague terms such as “our worlds,” “their way of living,” and “cultural aspect” as an eloquent front in a politically correct discourse. “Culture,” for example, is not used as a cultural-racial or skin-color group reference, nor entails the reflexivity of the participants’ own White privilege in informing their understanding of the Other. Referring to an incident during her time in Cambodia, Samantha observes, “. . . I’m not cut out for work like this. . . . That’s really a cultural thing . . . they can use them ((the machetes)) for absolutely anything. . . it’s amazing . . .” Tilly echoes:

. . . there was a dead scorpion beneath where her head had been. . . ((living)) conditions were interesting. Like, I’m fine, because I’ve done some rugged camping . . . just that whole deal of our worlds are very different, and our comfort levels are very different. And that’s normal to them . . . just their way of living. . .

Both observations imply that the villagers have voluntarily chosen the lives they live. Their contention that their hosts live in different “worlds” suggests a different threshold for physical tolerance for them and their hosts, but the participants’ reliance on their own interpretation to label the lived reality of the Other preclude the possibility of engaging in meaningful ICD.

In fact, the destitution in the host communities cannot be separated from the socio-historical influences nested in the politics of poverty in rural areas, in the local history, and in related Third World socio-economic conditions (Deolalikar, 2003). The participants’ ignorance of political situatedness, therefore, avoids the juxtaposition of the hosts’ poverty against their own unearned privilege as college-educated White Americans. Therefore, Tilly’s comparison of her hosts’ involuntary hard life with her voluntary privilege of “rugged camping” is as ignorant as Samantha’s thinking her hosts’ use of machetes instead of specialized power tools is admirable. The participants fail to tease out and acknowledge their dominance in the discursive space, which is shaped by dominant White American ideologies.

In the absence of critical reflection on their taken-for-granted (White American) privilege, coupled with the dismissal of the situatedness that is required in a responsive ICD, the participants exit the conversation having reinforced the dominant ideologies. They bolster their White knowledge about the non-White Other and White domination of the discursive space of IV. Consequently, the volunteers’ role in contributing to and sustaining oppression, including Third World poverty, is left unchallenged.
Their Resourcefulness

The dismissal of the hosts’ lived reality is a discursive choice in the participants’ narratives. Despite being sensitized during their pre-departure training to the lived reality of their hosts, the participants claim supremacy of the Other by constraining the discursive space, limiting it to their own voices and interpretations. Samantha is not alone in professing her admiration for the hosts’ resilience; all the participants heap praises on their hosts, even for displaying rudimentary skills needed for simple everyday activities (e.g., using buckets to shower or sharing communal meals). Julie, for example, marvels at how the villagers “use their hands” to dig soil for construction the “old fashioned way” instead of using “technology.” She notes, “. . . they really used everything . . . in a proficient and effective way. . . that was incredible that people still knew a lot of the basic survival skills . . . that is lost in our culture.”

Paradoxically, the effusive praises and seemingly innocent acts of appreciating the hosts’ innovativeness hide a sinister motive—that is, the participants are assuming dominance in the host-volunteer relationship by positioning their competent adult hosts in the child ego state. The use of compliments privileges the hosts’ resourcefulness in the discursive space, but totally misses the poverty that should be obvious even to untrained eyes. Although the participants try to lighten up their descriptions with words like “down to earth,” “nonmaterialistic,” “simple,” and “[the] focus on life quality,” this can further be viewed as imposing their unverified assumptions on their hosts. Moreover, their remarkable lack of understanding about their own privileged American upbringing allows them to avoid such difficult discussions as why such resourceful people lead such poor lives. They view the hosts’ lack of worldly possessions as idyllic. As Tilly observed, “. . . they . . . have two pots and one pan . . . for their whole life. . . that’s all they have. And, that’s all they need. And, they don’t want more.”

Additionally, the participants’ use of platitudes and self-defined terms such as “culture” to describe the villagers’ mundane activities establishes a politically correct discursive space. These are strategic discursive moves that save the participants from wading into difficult conversations about hardship, privilege, and oppression, which might subject them to unwarranted challenges.

Their Otherworldliness

Armed only with their own assumptions about the “Third World,” the narratives of the
volunteers serve to erase the voice of the Other, while simultaneously reinforcing the stereotypical Western image of the “Third World.” The fantasy of the “Third World” as otherworldly, simple, and undeveloped—what Julie calls “old fashioned”—is actually a common thread in these narratives. Tripp, who volunteered at a Thai village and a Thai-Myanmar border refugee camp, exemplifies this belief:

These people are just genuine . . . beautiful inside and out . . . Every day for them is working and just having the ability to feed their families . . . their worries, their problems, the things that make them happy are just much more simple and down to earth. It makes life just seem happy and calm and not all stressful.

Likewise, Katie thinks “Third World” life is wonderful:

Unlike in the United States, ((where)) you wake up and go work in corporations. . . here, you wake up, and you work with your ox and your buffalo. And you’re, um, repairing your house, feeding the chickens. . . . Like they live to sustain themselves and their family. . . . It’s just about making ends meet. Their life, so calm and so peaceful.

To the participants, the villagers’ life and death struggles to survive—their raw, “down to earth” (i.e., mundane) lives—appear idyllic. The participants insist, incredulously, that even with few necessities and virtually no luxuries, “their ((hosts’)) life quality is better” when pitted against “modern” life.” Comparing the Cambodian villagers’ daily lives to her family tradition of Thanksgiving, Samantha asserts, “. . . our holidays are a time to get together as a family . . . . But that’s how it is for them almost every day.” Thus, based on their fantasy of “Third World” mystique, the participants believe that “These places are so cool and exotic” (according to Nicole) and “[Asia is] a mystery” (according to Austin).

While many of the comments about the “Third World” are meant to be flattering, they can sometimes be demeaning. For example, some comments imply that the villagers lack the complex brain power to analyze the intricacies of their living conditions; that lacking an education, the villagers are content to live life as is. Jessica, for example, is a proponent of the idea that the villagers’ simple life is the foundation of their happiness. Describing amputees who lived through the U.S. carpet-bombing of rural Cambodia during the Vietnam war, she says, “They went through hell . . . and back . . . . But, they came out of it just so happy . . . . It’s just like they’re different, their life, is just be happy.” Tilly concurs, “For all the shit we have done to them, and for them to be so excited to see us . . . . I mean, they are just so happy.” Such comments would be funny if the events to which they refer were not so tragic and, unfortunately, no positive spin can mask those historical injustices. In fact, they replicate and
perpetuate the dominant White discourse, which is blind to historical injustices and in silencing and demeaning the Other.

Consequently, the volunteers are not able to fully make use of their IV opportunities to enact social justice. As *voluntourists* they are, knowingly or unknowingly, maintaining their status quo as White Western visitors who fix their touristic gaze on the natives, but pay only lip service to social justice issues.

**Their Destiny**

While each participant found something to marvel at during their sojourn, many also decry their hosts’ lack of social advancement. Nicole, who volunteered in villages in Cambodia, Thailand, and the Thai-Myanmar border, recalls her visit to a refugee camp in Northern Thailand and describes feeling hopeless about the refugees’ situation. She says, “I don’t know just how you can be born into a situation so out of your control. And, there’s nothing you can do about it. You just have to make the best of it.” Julie, however, believes she can use her privilege to help change some destinies:

> . . . it would be really incredible, to find some child that . . . will never have opportunities like I was privileged enough to be born into America. And to bring them to America, and teach them English. . . and give them this incredible life . . . . So that maybe one day, they can . . . do the things they want to do just like I am.

While Julie’s wish to transform a “Third World” child’s life is admirable, both her and Nicole’s narratives reveal a subtle bias for the superiority of the American way of living and doing things. As insinuated, abundance, freedom, and equality can be found in the romanticized American dream, as long as someone has a will to succeed (Zinn, 2015). This unquestioned American way—which in their eyes is the only right way—is used to espouse their beliefs and values.

*The Volunteers’ Savor Complex*

Viewed from a different perspective, Julie’s desire to transform the life of a “Third World” child is merely a perpetuation of the White (Western) savior complex. The savior complex assumes that people of privilege can *save* the Other from their (i.e., Third World) destiny. Julie’s wish assumes that the Other should be *more like us*, and those who deviate from the norms and expectations of the dominant group must be corrected. In her eyes, the child is a lesser Other who can only be saved from painful (Third Word) destiny through assimilation
into American culture.

While the participants acknowledge the importance of understanding the nature of their volunteer work and are sensitive to the possibility that their actions will be perceived negatively, their discourse about how they “give back to the community” contradicts their well-articulated caution. Says Nicole, “I learned . . . that you are not volunteering to help people. . . . Don’t get a sense of . . . you are better somehow.” Austin, whose greatest regret was not being allowed to use his knowledge to build a water filtration system in a Cambodian village, adds, “I want to give back to the people . . . to let the benefit from my time, to benefit from my skills and education.” Sounding like social justice warriors, the participants expect the Other to automatically accept their help. However, this way of “giving back to the community” comes off as a demeaning act camouflaged as goodwill—a practice that harkens back to the old missionary philosophy of saving the Other.

The participants present their IV discourse and understanding of the Other in emotionally engaging language filled with admiration, compassion, and altruism, and their willingness to volunteer is presented as crossing borders and cultures. However, they rarely tackle matters that cross racial boundaries or mention the term race, and treat their encounters with otherness as color-blind. In reality, were Julie to succeed in bringing a non-White child to “America,” the child may never enjoy the same “incredible life” full of abundance that she herself enjoys. In other words, denying the existence of racial reality does not make it go away.

In sum, while IV does cross racial boundaries, color-blindness serves as an ally of racism (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). Therefore, the participants’ seemingly graceful discursive moves to maintain a politically correct IV discourse only serve to camouflage their lack of knowledge about fair skin privilege and to silence any talk about Third World poverty—an oppressive reality sustained by White supremacy.

Discussion

This study’s micro-analysis of language used in IV discourse reveals the participants’ attitudes and appraisals of the Other that go beyond and even contradict their covert articulation of the institutional goals of IV. In particular, structural relationships of dominance are revealed not only through the participants’ use of otherization, but also well-intentioned compliments and shows of goodwill. The participants’ seeming respect and admiration for the Other is revealed to hide their superiority over the hosts through the clever use of language. While previous studies documented IV’s reinforcement of Western power status quo by reviewing the
different power statuses of the host-volunteer relationship (Bandyopadhyay, 2019; Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017), the current study, contributes further to the literature by illustrating the role of communicative processes in enacting these differences. Specifically, the perpetuation of the power status quo would not be possible without the volunteers engaging in the discursive representation of the Other.

The irony is that through their narratives of emotionally enticing values, the volunteers enable the perpetuation of the very inequities IV is trying to correct. Volunteers with good intention, thus, act as willing servants of social institutions that impose White dominant ideologies on the Other. IV, then, is an institution that easily falls prey to hegemony despite its articulated mission of fighting for social justice. Often, apolitical interpersonal networks, such as IV programs sanctioned by universities, serve as effective mechanisms for spreading dominant ideologies encapsulated in the volunteers’ cultural practices. In essence, IV openly legitimizes the promotion of dominant White American traditions in an intercultural space that is supposed to foster ICD.

Moreover, the volunteers’ willingness to be entertained by their own fantasy of the “Third World,” rather than engage with and learn from the Other, further reinforces the role of IV in permitting an artificial intercultural space for the dominant group’s perpetuation of orientalism (Said, 1978). That these findings on IV discourse replicate Said’s orientalism is not new; what this study brings out effectively is the participants’ willful denial or ignorance about the lived reality of the Other—despite having been pre-warned and sensitized about what to expect in IV. Mirroring the trajectory of the development of the White-washed intercultural communication discipline, it seems that the zoological approach to learning about the Other is easier for the participants than engaging in dialogical processes (Lee, 2018). Since IV is inescapably a power-laden communication process enacted through discourse, its embodiment in the volunteers and their interactions with their hosts is insufficient to impart adequate learning about genuine intercultural interactions. Therefore, self-reflexivity that entails the interrogation of the normalization of Whiteness is crucial to realizing a productive ICD in IV and for broader global relations.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Fundamentally, IV is a Western enterprise that is being exported to the Third World. Therefore, addressing issues that come along with IV interventions lies in the hands of its predominantly White participants (i.e., incl. the volunteers, academics in the field, program and
event designers, tour guides, orientation leaders, and those who facilitate the interaction locally and with the hosts overseas). However, in order for the White participants to initiate corrective measures, the problematization of Whiteness in IV discourse and practice must be undertaken. As the application of the PRCT in testing IV discourse shows, the participants’ lack knowledge about their role in perpetuating White dominant ideologies. This shortcoming denies them the ability to juxtapose the differences they observe against their own taken-for-granted assumptions, which would lead to meaningful intercultural experiences. With education in mind, this study builds on the central tenets of the PRCT by laying out possible pedagogical strategies for enacting a politically responsive ICD in IV.

The first step to building meaningful strategy is recognizing that for IV to enact its mission of social justice, the work must entail the critical interrogation of Whiteness, which lies at the core of the IV industry and anti-racism education (e.g., see Lee, 2018). Fundamentally, Whiteness and power inequalities become lived racial reality as soon as Whites encounter the Other. Since at its core IV involves cultural exchange (i.e., a two-way communication), looking out for the Other without examining one’s role and impact in the interaction clearly does not result in a meaningful exchange. To realize true cultural exchange through IV, White participants (and possibly other races involved) must educate themselves about the role of Whiteness in general and in IV in particular (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Empowering the participants to learn about and interrogate Whiteness encourages them to challenge their own contributions to the status quo (Lee, 2018). It allows them to engage in self-reflexivity which, according to Yep (2010), is not about the participants’ justification for the process of dialogue. Rather, it speaks to their consciousness and accountability, such as their motivation for engaging in IV as an ICD, the position from which they enact social justice, the hosts to whom they are accountable in cultural representation, and the effects of and accountability for their actions (also see Alcoff, 1995). In this respect self-reflexivity is a tool for empowerment and transformation (Lee, 2019) in power-laden communication within and beyond IV.

The findings of this study also show that the volunteers’ struggles to make sense of their IV experience and explore meaningful conversations with their hosts partially stem from their failure to proactively engage in ICD because they did not have sufficient knowledge about their host communities. Although all participants attended the pre-departure orientation sessions for their trips, many did not read the assigned books, while others chose not to learn about their host communities in a bid to make their trips as adventurous as possible. However, addressing strategies for strengthening pre-departure learning processes is beyond the scope of this study.
With respect to engaging in ICD with the host communities, meaningful interrogation cannot be conducted without sufficient knowledge and understanding of the specific communities. Therefore, this study recommends the critical selection and interrogation of any representations or cultural artifacts and inscriptions of the host communities in order to present an emic (i.e., native) perspective of the Other. Sources written by native authors constitute good outlets for this purpose (Lee, 2016). Unfortunately, many such sources lack translated versions and present challenges to volunteers who do not speak or understand the host languages. However, even such a challenge presents opportunities for examination through the critical lens for what it says about White (especially English-speaking) dominance in the global arena; for instance, it sheds light on the development of the IV industry, which is heavily Westernized. Therefore, there is need for Western authors to build bridges with native authors from the host communities to promote the translation of their works, albeit with the authors’ consent and supervision (e.g., see Lee, 2016).

The foregoing recommendation allows the participants to explore different perspectives pre- and post-trips. Even without the knowledge of host languages with native fluency, the participants can still learn from the Other, since native voices would be included and valued. While it would be ideal if the participants spoke the host languages, it is, nevertheless, imperative that, in situations where that is not possible, the exploration of different perspectives is not constrained by language and dominant Western ideologies. By exploring the different perspectives and acknowledging their taken-for-granted assumptions and modest but incomplete knowledge of the Other, the volunteers will be able to engage in genuine ICD.

Last, since meaningful ICD is historically situated, participants must understand IV’s history and development as it relates to world history and colonialism; its relations to White dominance in the volunteers’ countries of origin; and the role that Whiteness plays in the host communities. The proposed suggestions for learning may seem broad and daunting; however, the goal of this exercise is not to achieve comprehensiveness in the subject topic, but to empower and encourage the participants to learn and interrogate Whiteness in their mundane discourse before, during, and after IV trips.

All in all, the combination of the above strategies to promote ICD through IV is illustrative of the process of engaging in political responsiveness, but not political correctness, in the encounter with otherness. The overwhelming work needed to disrupt and dismantle White dominant ideologies and their perpetuation in IV and global relations attests to the long history of Western dominance in the discipline, which has continued without much interrogation (Lee, 2016; Miike, 2006). However, it is important to emphasize that the success of this work is not
defined by its completeness; rather, it must be viewed as building the momentum to empower participants to engage in ICD within and beyond IV.

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Michael Gómez Dobrott. An analysis of a school experience for the First Nations in Canada: Organization, Structure, Philosophy and Attention to Cultural Diversity

ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of this century, there have been several schools which have begun to operate from an indigenous perspective. This has been a response to the country's social reality and an attempt to mitigate and correct the consequences of residential schools, which caused significant and almost irreparable cultural losses. Yet, very little research has been carried out on how these schools work or on the degree of success of the programs being implemented.
The aim of this study is precisely to understand how one of them, the Aboriginal Learning Centre of Calgary, functions. We will do this by referring to the principles of intercultural education and by analyzing, at the same time, how the Aboriginal Focus Program is carried out.

With this purpose, we observed the school’s daily routine, interviewed staff members, discussing topics such as their professional backgrounds, the basics of the school’s management, their philosophy, the educational activities and their rapport with the families.

The resulting conclusions reveal that, despite the fact that not all the tenets of intercultural education are fulfilled, this school utilizes fundamental tools which help to construct, consolidate and preserve an indigenous cultural identity, while at the same time providing a safe space for the Aboriginal families of the city.

KEYWORDS: Aboriginal Learning Center; intercultural education; indigenous; First Nations.
1. Introduction

In this article, we will focus on understanding how the Aboriginal Learning Center in the city of Calgary, Alberta, functions. Furthermore, and from the perspective of the principles of intercultural and bilingual education, we will examine how the Aboriginal Focus is being implemented in this school.

In order to fulfill these aims, we will begin by discussing some of the most relevant theoretical aspects regarding intercultural education and bilingual education. We will also take into consideration the original peoples of Canada, highlighting information which will help us understand their culture and their present situation. In the following pages, we intend to analyze the way Calgary’s ALC operates. We will also include the design and the objectives of our research, as well as the methodology used to collect our data. Finally, we will present our results and our conclusions.

2. Theoretical Framework

If we bear in mind the main goal of our research and we aim to determine to what degree the main posits of intercultural and bilingual education are met, it becomes essential that we first understand the tenets of these approaches. This will be done by examining the work of experts in the field.

2.1. Intercultural Education: Some Basic Theoretical Aspects

Besalú (2002) argues that the fundamental objectives of intercultural education are the acknowledgement of cultural diversity and respect for the identities of all cultures, adding that we must strive to build a diverse, democratic and cohesive society. From this standpoint, schools must promote cultural plurality. Banks (2001) states that many well-intentioned teachers make the mistake of believing that intercultural education is merely a question of integrating contents related to other cultural groups into an already existing curriculum. He adds that, while including these contents is necessary, it makes up only the first dimension of intercultural education. In fact, there are at least another four dimensions: the process of knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and an empowering school

37 On June 22, 2017, during the Aboriginal Awareness Week, the original name, Aboriginal Learning Center, was changed to “Niitsitapi Learning Centre”. Nevertheless, throughout this paper the center will be referred to as ALC, since the majority of the published work written on this subject still refers to it as the Aboriginal Learning Center.
culture and social structure. All of them are evidently tasks not easily achieved and which should only be carried out by highly committed and trained educational instructors.

A large number of authors promote and defend intercultural education, and Rios and Stanton (2011) help us to better understand the reasons for advocating it. One of the primary justifications has to do with the notion of demographic imperative. Cultural and linguistic diversity has increased greatly in recent years. These authors refer to a clear example which can be found in the United States in elementary schools: in 2015, 22% of the children at this stage spoke a language other than English at home. Cultural elements are becoming more and more diverse in the classroom, and they should be fairly represented – not just from the standpoint of social equity but also as a means of reaching the academic success of as many students as possible. In the United States, the statistics gathered from the results of standardized testing for math and reading skills reflect a comparatively lower degree of success in students who share variables like race, social class and gender with respect to Caucasians in general. According to Cummins (2000, pp. 46-68), when we go about analyzing these divides from an international perspective, it becomes clear that the assimilation strategies followed for many years in the U.S. schools have only contributed to increase the gaps. As a result, students are becoming more marginalized and stigmatized, far from reaching their potential.

Unlike the efforts taken to increase assimilation in an attempt to minimalize differences amongst students, intercultural education aims to reaffirm each child’s cultural identity and acknowledge the importance of diversity. Ríos and Stanton (2011, p. 22) have found that, “Responsive teachers view diversity not as a melting pot, but as an orchestra”. Just as each musical instrument is unique and makes a valuable contribution to the final results of the orchestra, students, as well, play an important role in improving society as a whole, thanks to their individual identities and to their personal and cultural attributes.

2.2. Bilingual Education: Its Role in the Construction of a Cultural Identity

Many of the goals of intercultural education which we have referred to are unattainable if a bilingual or multilingual education is not an integral part of this learning experience. Expanding a child’s knowledge of other languages besides his/her mother tongue helps to consolidate cultural identities and to highlight the importance of diversity. The Chippewa author, Basil Johnston (2011, p. 129), illustrates this point with the following words, “Language is the one feature that sets apart the Blackfoot from the Cree and the Cree from the Onandaga and the Cayuda from the Anishinaabeg”. Indeed, there are other many benefits linked to bilingual education, such as the development of linguistic, cognitive and academic knowledge referred
to by Jim Cummins. However, due to the nature of our research, we will focus primarily on the more cultural aspects of this type of education. In the matter at hand, the city of Calgary will be the center of our attention. Within this scope, we have observed three language-learning contexts which all present notable differentiating characteristics and yet share a significant cultural component:

(1) Schools which implement bilingual English/French programs and whose main aim it is to broaden the cultural and professional horizons of their students. Data published by the Calgary Board of Education (2019) confirmed that there are 25 French immersion schools, as well as 11 Spanish bilingual, 5 Chinese bilingual and 1 German bilingual centers at the Elementary school level.

(2) Bilingual education as a necessary tool for students with low-level linguistic competence in their first language, i.e. English, ensuring that they are provided with the same learning conditions as the other native English speakers in their class.

(3) Education which introduces First Nation, Métis and Inuit students to Indigenous languages with the purpose of building, consolidating and preserving their cultural identity while fostering in these students the self-confidence needed to share their heritage with pride outside of the school boundaries. In Calgary, there are three schools in which Blackfoot and Cree are taught, however neither of these languages have a vehicular function, to date.

Despite the fact that these scenarios take place in the same city, they have not always had the same institutional support. While the effort invested in establishing a quality bilingual English/French education is admirable, the more than 200 First-Nation, Métis and Inuit languages have not received the same just and respectful treatment (Cook & Flynn, 2008). Initial policies of assimilation carried out by European colonists were greatly responsible for the current state of Indigenous languages, which have also suffered from their total or near extinction as their last speakers and advocates have passed away. Indeed, the present situation of these languages is grim. Cook and Flynn (2008) add that even the Indigenous languages spoken by a larger number of people may soon be obsolete due to the strong influence of French, English and the powerful presence of Mass Media in today’s society.

Fortunately, not all the news regarding the preservation of Indigenous culture is as disheartening. Aboriginal communities have spent years struggling to save their ancestral
languages and thanks to support provided by the government, museums and universities, programs are now being implemented to preserve and promote them. As a result, some like Tsilhqot’in, Ktunaxa and Secwepemetsin have been able to formally establish spelling rules, while others have been included in some school curricula, as in the case of the ALC. We will examine in depth how this school functions in following pages, once contextual information has been provided as a means of helping to fully understanding its purpose, relevance and impact within the city of Calgary.

2.3. The Original Peoples of Canada

The words, “Indigenous”, “First Nations”, “Métis” e “Inuit” have appeared in the previous pages of this paper and should now be properly discussed. Understanding how an Indigenous center in Calgary works required becoming familiar to the Aboriginal culture of this city and observing some of its cultural features – especially those that have had a large impact, such as a number of educational measures now being implemented in this type of school.

First of all, we should understand that in Canada, when referring to the Aboriginal population, we are speaking of three different peoples who were early inhabitants of Canadian territory: the First Nations, the Métis and the Inuit. The Government of Canada’s webpage (Government of Canada, 2011) stresses the importance of acknowledging that each of these groups has a different culture due, in part, to the diverse characteristics of the territories they traditionally inhabited. Whereas the First Nations lived from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast, below the Arctic Ocean, the Inuit lived further north. The Métis, on the other hand, were descendants of First Nations and European fur trades (primarily French), and lived throughout Canadian territories.

Given that the Vice-Principal of the ALC confirmed to us that the majority of the students at her school were First Nations and the number of Métis and Inuit children enrolled was minimal, this paper will concentrate on the first and largest group.

The origins of the First Nations go back as far as 12,000 years ago (Frideres, 2016), when the first Indigenous peoples entered Canadian territory through the Bering Strait. There seems to be a theoretical consensus that between the 9th and 13th centuries agriculture flourished under favorable climate conditions, which resulted in a considerable increase in the Aboriginal population, which grew to three million by the beginning of the 16th century. This steady growth in population witnessed a drastic decrease, coinciding with the arrival of European settlers in the 17th century: nearly 95% of the Indigenous people died, until, as previously mentioned, there were only 100,000 at the start of the 20th century. Constant wars and conflicts between
the Indigenous people and the colonists, disease and alcohol introduced from Europe, along with the fur trade, made a devastating impact on the Aborigines, with fatal consequences for many of them.

Their lifestyle changed radically with the arrival of the colonists, and not only during the first years in which Aborigines and Europeans came into contact with each other, but much later as well. Aggressive assimilation policies of the twentieth century, epitomized by residential schools, were greatly responsible for these changes, and came to represent a very dark period in Canadian educational practices.

2.4. Educating the First Nations and the Métis: Historical Background

Residential schools with both educational and missionary aims were established upon the arrival of European settlers (Charles & Gabor, 2006). The methods implemented, which focused on instilling in students Christian values, included physical and sexual abuse along with a wide variety of humiliations, formally acknowledged later by the Canadian government (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). This cruel treatment resulted in the death of more than 6,000 Indigenous children. Yet it was not until 1996 that the last residential school, located in Saskatchewan, was shut down (Treble & O’Hara, 2017).

The impact on the Indigenous culture and its children, in particular, has been and continues to be devastating. The First Nations Assembly (Assembly of First Nations, 1994) refers to the repercussions of the schools on several generations of Indigenous peoples. The aftermath is still being felt: loss of a sense of identity, of family ties, of the Indigenous language and culture, low self-esteem, as well as an increase in a sense of inferiority and a dependence on a non-native society. Drug, alcohol and gambling addictions and eating disorders are also consequences of the way children were treated in residential schools.

The ALC, however, is a clear example of the direction that Canadian educational policies have taken in recent years. It is one of a group of centers that have be created since 2002 and which addresses the adverse effects of residential schools with awareness and sensitivity.

3. Methodology

In order to understand the educational reality of this Indigenous center located in Calgary, we needed to approach and establish relationships with the educational community there. Through qualitative research, we established a non-experimental, transversal and descriptive model, which provided us with the flexibility to evolve as we built up our knowledge of the school and how it operated. To successfully achieve our main goal, we define the following specific
objectives:

- To identify the professional profiles of the ALC staff members and to what degree they corresponded with the school’s educational philosophy and proposals.

- To study how the ALC was managed and organized, including the school calendar, schedules and resource material available.

- To understand the school’s philosophy, its congruity with current legislation and how this is reflected in the design and application of the curriculum.

- To assess the ALC’s academic activity from the point of view of the professionals involved: teaching methods, relevance of the Indigenous languages in the learning experience and the role of evaluation in this process.

- To describe the strategies and tools used by the ALC professionals to promote contact and build relationships with the students’ families.

In order to fulfill these objectives, we gathered the necessary information, which we did through ethnographic techniques, namely, participant observation and in-depth interviews.

With regards to the first technique, and with reference to Anguera (1995), we believe that it is well suited to the context of our educational research for a number of reasons, which we were able to observe personally:

- The direct contact with both the teaching staff and the managerial team fostered a smooth and fruitful rapport, which became more and more receptive on all parts. This positive attitude towards our interest in the ALC facilitated our access to information which, under other circumstances, we would not have been able to obtain, such as monthly handouts sent to parents and classroom observation.

- Furthermore, we accessed this data in real time. We were invited to observe members of the teaching staff outside of their classrooms, as well: moving through the hallways, taking part in a number of activities and celebrations. Our observation took place within a comfortable and non-invasive context, with the assurance that no modifications had been made in the children’s daily routines and lesson plans.
• We were also able to become familiar with the professionals that we observed, which was extremely helpful when it came to interpreting the information provided. Non-verbal communication also proved to be very valuable. As we had more and more conversations with these staff members, we became aware of which questions they felt more comfortable answering, for example, whether or not they hesitated before responding, or their degree of enthusiasm when discussing a topic they were especially devoted to.

To implement another of the ethnographic techniques during our research, the in-depth interview, we followed Robles’ guidelines. He sees this technique as a set of reiterated, face-to-face meetings between the researcher and the informers with the purpose of becoming familiar with one another and reaching an understanding of the individuality of each participant (2011, p. 39). In this sense, we strived to maintain a close and personal approach with our interviewees, and we were able to build strong bonds with them. Our interviews, while frequent, never lasted more than an hour. They always took place in the familiar context of the school grounds, thus allowing the participants to feel comfortable. Moreover, the interviews were initiated informally, with purposely open questions so as to encourage the interviewee to adapt to this situation. Thanks to these considerations and the thorough planning and gathering of information, we were able to access and analyze the data which will be discussed in the following section of this paper. Furthermore, we also made a point of trying to establish contact with a variety of staff members belonging to different groups of the educational community, which can be observed in the diversity of our selection:

• L.T.: Vice-principal and person in charge of promoting the ALC by building relationships with other schools.

• K.P.: School counselor and first-grade teacher.

• J.G.: School counselor and Kindergarten teacher.

• A.L.: First-grade teacher.

• S.M.: Counselor of one of the five areas in the school district and in charge of implementing the training of ALC teachers in matters of Indigenous education.
S.C.: Diversity and Learning Support Advisor, also outside staff member whose purpose it is to act as liaison between Indigenous families and any of the schools in Calgary with First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit students enrolled.

Apart from the interviews and the observation of numerous activities and ceremonies which took place at the school during our visits, we were able to sit in on A.L.’s classes, which helped us collect even more information on the Indigenous students themselves, as well as on the strategies and teaching methods used by the teachers.

4. Results

In light of the information gathered, we were able to observe that the ALC is a school in which only children who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit enroll. At first, this reality presented us with a degree of uncertainty, as our research was based on Cushner’s proposals on intercultural education (1998) which make reference to the need to have a full understanding of the differences and similarities amongst cultures and the collaborative efforts made to enrich the children’s learning experiences through these cultures. How can there be a merging of cultures at a school where only one culture exists? The Vice-Principal of the ALC, L.T., helped us to comprehend why there was a need for a school with students who are exclusively Indigenous.

Firstly, she explained that for the children enrolled, the time spent at the ALC is the previous stage to their schooling in a more conventional public, private or chartered school within the Calgary school district. In a country in which nearly 30% of the Indigenous students from first grade to sixth grade need professional support to deal with emotional or behavioral problems (Statistics Canada, 2015), it seems imperative to offer an alternative which takes into account these children’s life views and cultural contexts, while helping them to eventually transition into a more mainstream school setting. The Vice-Principal highlighted that at the ALC, only four of the 65 students enrolled required this additional support. This stands for around 6% of the student body, which is notably lower than the national average.

Secondly, L.T. stated that the recent history of Indigenous education, characterized, as we now know, by assimilationism and abuse, has generated feelings of mistrust and wariness among families towards the educational alternatives offered by the Canadian government. Being able to partake in a learning experience from an Aboriginal perspective, with experienced teachers trained specifically for this purpose, and at a school whose managerial team is Aboriginal, as well, makes this school unique and appealing to families.
Finally, the immense loss of Indigenous culture that residential schools were greatly responsible for and, in general, the arrival of settlers to Canadian territory calls for measures which will guarantee the cultural preservation of the original peoples of this country. We have already discussed the large number of Indigenous languages that have been extinguished and the obstacles the First Nations face when trying to preserve their culture. A common space in which different perspectives and traditions are not only respected but fostered is necessary.

When working in the classroom with their students, the teachers at the ALC look to, as an essential point of reference, the principles of the “Medicine Wheel” and the “Seven Sacred Teachings”38, cornerstones of Indigenous education. There are plenty of opportunities during the day for their students to reflect upon their feelings and their actions, and for the Indigenous elders to pass on their knowledge through storytelling and workshops. It is precisely elements like the weekly class visits paid by First Nation elders, the celebration of ceremonies like “smudging”39, the approximation to Indigenous languages, family support inside and outside the school grounds, and an individualized teaching approach that which differentiates this school from others which are under the auspices of the Calgary Board of Education (hereafter, CBE).

Clearly, the school approach would be difficult to implement if the ALC did not have an experienced, coordinated and motivated staff. During our visits, we were able to witness that the three teachers we interviewed had been teaching Indigenous children for over eight years, which is admirable since only one of the three functioning Aboriginal centers in Calgary, the Piitoayis Family School, has been operating since its inauguration in 2002. Secondly, the coordination amongst the teachers is visible in their day-to-day practice. Most of their classes are organized collaboratively, and to do so they spend a great deal of time after school preparing their lessons together. Furthermore, the teaching staff attends weekly meetings which are run by the Principal, M.R. Lastly, the teachers’ high degree of motivation was manifested when assessing how they felt about their job. All of the interviewees indicated that they spent more than two hours a day preparing their classes, yet they appeared not to object to this. On the

38 Educational philosophies based on seven main principles which have been adopted by a number of Indigenous communities: Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility and Truth (The Seven Teachings, 2019).

39 A First Nations’ tradition which involves burning one or more medicinal plants and enveloping one’s body in the smoke produced to cleanse it of negative thoughts.
contrary, they enthusiastically and cheerfully described to us, in great detail, the upcoming plans and activities they had designed.

Within the school calendar, there are nine days devoted to teacher training. Students do not attend class on these days, which allows teachers to focus on updating and improving their practices, and on sharing their experiences with the rest of the staff, while learning from the instructors. In the particular case of the ALC, these favorable elements, like the provision of training, the teachers’ ample experience, the time spent on coordination and cross-sector planning, merge together to bring out the very best in the professionals.

This motivation which we mention above, was not only manifested verbally to us but through our classroom observations, as well. Many of A.L.’s classes were characterized by the application of interest-based learning. He also paid close attention to the students’ attitudes and aptitudes, and at times even gave them priority over normative content. During our shadowing, comments like, “getting them to write is more important than what they write” were not uncommon. A.L. also set up learning stations from which the students could choose. He did not object to a student spending the whole week on a building station, for example, instead of moving on to others related to art, theater or music, since he felt that the significant aspect of this activity was to keep his students highly engaged cognitively while they were working. The majority of A.L.’s pupils were focused as they worked during the entire period at the different stations, and many made proposals to do their own projects, such as a drawing a comic strip or writing a thank you note to the school bus driver.

We were witnessing, clearly, a constructivist approach, which A.L. and his colleagues depended on substantially. In the words of Renés Arellano and Martínez Geijo, they “relied on the students’ initial knowledge so as to develop teaching sequences which would later allow them to reconstruct these initial notions that would eventually become more scientific” (2015, p. 32). The circle assemblies held between teacher and students proved to be important instruments for the teachers. At these assemblies, teachers identified the children’s existing knowledge on the subjects to be developed, contrasted it with their planned objectives, and then, when necessary, modified their aims accordingly. Our interviews also allowed us to witness how the teachers not only valued their interaction with their students but also the communication which took place amongst the children. Teamwork and cooperative learning were essential factors of their teaching approach.

When it came to the assessment of these activities, at the ALC tests and exams were not discussed. Instead, teachers carried out what Wolf and Reardon (1996) refer to as “alternative assessment”. Firstly, the items which were assessed were related to experiments carried out by
the students, feedback collected during the circle assemblies and other projects they did. Observation was fundamental for the teachers and we could frequently see them taking notes on the children’s accomplishments or taking pictures of their projects. Furthermore, there were plenty of opportunities for the students to take part in their own assessment and in that of their classmates, either by expressing themselves verbally or by placing circular stickers on the projects they liked the most.

English was the instrumental language used in the classroom. In fact, the absence of bilingual instruction is one of the weakest points to be observed. S.M., the CBE guidance counsellor, is of the same opinion and, although she is aware of how difficult it is to hire qualified teachers, linguistically competent in Cree or Blackfoot, she believes that members of the teaching staff should receive training to this effect. At the beginning of this article, we spoke of the relevant role language plays in the preservation of cultural identity and the way in which many languages have disappeared due to the ostracism of the Indigenous peoples. In this regard, the ALC is striving to foster an interest in Indigenous languages amongst its students by holding weekly sessions with elders who introduce the children to vocabulary used by their people.

In a more positive vein, we will now discuss one of the ALC’s strong points, according to both the school staff and other professionals from the district: their rapport with the families.

Vila (1998, p. 110) asserts that, “(...) It is hard to think of a successful educational experience without the explicit participation of the families”. In this sense, the ALC is very accessible, communication is excellent between families and staff members, and parents are encouraged to spend time on the school grounds, both inside and out. This favorable environment has been achieved thanks to the determination and persistence of every member of the educational community, from the managerial team to the teaching staff and the parents. M.R., the school Principal, makes it a point to keep families informed at all times. During our interviews, the teachers explained to us that M.R. sends families weekly bulletins, which include updates on the programmed extracurricular activities, such as the celebration of ceremonies, festivities, workshops or excursions. She also sends a monthly bulletin, in conjunction with the rest of the staff, in which details and photos of on-going projects are included, along with requests for parent volunteers needed to carry out future activities. Every family has the Principal’s contact email address and work phone number, which insure open channels of communication and approachability.

The determination of the teachers to maintain contact with the families is just as palpable. There is a telephone on the wall of every classroom with a list of all the families’ phone numbers which the teachers dial on a daily basis. “A first call to a parent should never
be to say something bad about his child” was one of the recommendations that the Vice-
Principal gave to the staff members, and we were often witnesses to these calls home to
comment on how well a child had performed on a particular day, to inform about an upcoming
excursion or to remind parents of their commitment to take part in one of the school workshops.

Families are further encouraged to engage in school life by means of an element that
has proven to be essential. There is a space available specifically for family members called the
Family Room where parents can spend time, whenever they wish, throughout the school day.
Here they can have breakfast (provided by the school), chat with other families, cook, set up
activities for the children, or simply spend down time sewing or reading. Achieving a cohesive
educational community was not coincidental but a result of these circumstances together with
at least three events planned weekly for students and families alike: ceremonies, workshops and
festivities.

Before moving on to our final conclusions, we would like to take another look at the
main objective of our research so as to examine to what degree the ALC meets the fundamental
premises of intercultural education. The “Colectivo Amani” (2009), when discussing
interculturality, highlights the need to establish interdependent relationships amongst diverse
cultures because they provide valuable cultural enrichment. It is evident that in the ALC this
does not occur since there is not a diversity of cultures coming together in the classroom.
Likewise, one of the most important features which García Medina, García Fernández, and
Moreno Herrero (2012, p. 30) mention in their work refers to the significant role that cultural
diversity plays in the learning process, yet this interaction was not taking place at the school.
Nieto and Bode (2008) also argue that educators should integrate multicultural content into all
curricular areas, yet at the ALC we have already seen how the focus is mainly on Indigenous
perspectives. Be it what it may, and despite not meeting some of the requisites of intercultural
education, the work being carried out at this school certainly addresses subsequent inclusion
into the mainstream educational system, while helping and teaching the students to preserve
and be proud of their cultural heritage.

5. Conclusions

Our conclusions have been drawn up by following the proposed aims presented throughout this
study. Furthermore, the process of reaching these conclusions was paralleled by our
investigative research, the results of which are set forth in this section.
With respect to the professional profiles of the teaching staff, we were surprised to discover that none of the teachers was Indigenous. Although we learned that all of them had extensive experience with First Nation students, the presence of professionals who could transmit their own Aboriginal culture and draw from their ancestors’ experiences would without a doubt be advantageous. Indeed, the managerial team is made up of Indigenous people, and this has helped the ALC to increase the trust of many of the members of the educational community, but ultimately, the students’ day to day activities are planned and coordinated by teachers imbued with western culture, yet teaching from an Aboriginal perspective.

Regarding the organization of the school, we were able to observe that coordination was achieved by means of weekly staff meetings lead by the Principal, and a considerable amount of time spent on collaborative class preparation. Professional development days, along with the ample material and teaching resources available, also helped to ensure the quality of the teachers’ daily performance. Within this framework, the ALC has managed to successfully forge a coordinated, trained team whose members enjoy what they do, as expressed once and again by the interviewees during our sessions.

Initially we had a few doubts about the school’s philosophy of catering exclusively to children with Indigenous backgrounds, as this criterion did not coincide with the tenets of interculturality described within the framework of this paper. However, as we progressed in our research, we became aware of the particularities of the Indigenous culture in Canada – the lack of trust generated by residential schools and government policies and the need to establish safe spaces for Aboriginal families which would provide schooling in a specific context to young children, before taking part in the mainstream educational system. It should be noted that in the ALC, the teachers implement the same curriculum as in the rest of the schools in the province. The differentiating element is the Indigenous focus which is enriched with specific cultural content.

Through observation, we verified that the implemented teaching methodology was characterized by careful planning based on the children’s interests and previous knowledge as well as by the importance which the teachers afforded to group and collaborative work. This approach rendered a learning environment permeated with motivation and commitment on the part of the students, and which contributed greatly to the successful achievement of the objectives previously defined by the entire school community. In turn, the teachers applied a system of learning assessment which features no conventional exams and is based on the observation of the interaction amongst students, and the appraisal of tasks, experiments and
projects. However, these same professionals did agree that the absence of Indigenous languages
during the children’s learning process is one of the weaknesses of the ALC.

The relationships that the school staff has forged with the families is by far the most
remarkable feature of the ALC. In light of the outcome of our interviews, we can conclude that
this is its distinguishing characteristic and that which they are most proud of and nurture.
Instruments like the Family Room, the weekly and monthly bulletins sent to the parents, the
sessions with the Indigenous elders and the frequent opportunities offered to volunteer are all
essential, and enhanced, thanks to the constant availability and vocation of the teachers. These
elements, implemented by all the members of the educational community, merge within a space
designed specifically for the ALC’s purposes to generate solid relationships which both foster
a mutual support system and the achievement of shared aims.

Indeed, and as we have conveyed when discussing the results of our research, the ALC
does not adhere to some of the main premises of intercultural education, such as the need to
create an environment which allows for the collaboration and enrichment of various cultures.
Nonetheless, the conclusions reached reveal that this school has implemented and continues to
implement fundamental tools which are crucial factors in the construction, consolidation and
preservation of the Indigenous cultural identity and which have provided a very much-needed
safe space for the Aboriginal families of Calgary.

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Executive Summary

Based on the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, Freire Charter School was founded in 1999 with the aim of providing educational engagement and opportunity within the urban landscape of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Twenty years later, Freire Schools is a thriving network of four urban campuses educating 2,000 students each year. Across the network, 89% of students are Black or Latinx, and almost all students qualify as economically disadvantaged. Our network is successful in empowering students to build their futures, graduating 87% from high school in four years. Network-wide, 77% of students report going to college the first year after graduating from high school. Many of these students are the first generation in their family to attend college.

This paper will present an overview of the twenty-year history of Freire Schools, focusing specifically on our flagship school, Freire Charter School, and our successes, challenges and ongoing learning. We will highlight our connection to Social Justice Education, beginning with Paulo Freire’s core theories laid out in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; developing our own practices to best serve our students; adjusting and learning as we grow; and above all, always striving to serve, enrich and challenge our students. This paper reflects on what we have learned and contemplates the future of Freire Schools.

This paper and associated presentation is prepared in conjunction with a documentary film that includes the perspectives of Freire Schools students, families, faculty, staff, and alumni. Our goal is to share our rich twenty-year history of creating schools that educate—to the highest standard—traditionally underserved student populations, providing them with the power to build the future. The story of Freire Schools is one in which education and social justice are inextricably intertwined. Ultimately, it is a story of compassion, dedication, teaching, learning and laughter.

Introduction

Freire Schools is a high-achieving network of four urban American public charter school campuses serving approximately 2,000 students in grades 5-12 (ages 11-21) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Wilmington, Delaware. Freire Schools is committed to ensuring that every single student who walks through our doors has the opportunity to succeed and grow. We provide students in underserved communities a college-prep learning experience focused on
individual freedom, critical thinking, and problem solving in an environment that emphasizes community, teamwork, and commitment to peace. By doing this, we produce collaborative and courageous citizen leaders ready to build the future. Every day, each school in the network is guided by the same values of equity, diversity, love, and critical thinking.

Freire Schools was born out of a crisis in public education in Pennsylvania and a belief that the integration of social justice education into a rigorous liberal arts curriculum could support students to succeed and narrow the achievement gap. Under this model, Freire Charter School opened as a single high school in 1999 with 100 students. Since that time, Freire Schools has become one of the leading charter school networks in the Philadelphia region, and has served over 5,000 students to date.

Social Justice Education, Paulo Freire, & Freire Schools

Paulo Freire was an educational philosopher and activist who embodied the tenets of social justice education. In his best-known work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argued for an educational approach based on exchange between students and teachers, in which there is mutual respect amongst all participants and everyone matters and has a voice. From our inception, Freire Schools has built an educational community that reflects the democratic principles Freire outlines, providing opportunity to underserved students in the form of challenging, enriching and engaging college-preparatory schools.

In 1999, as Freire opened its doors for the first time, we set out to be an institution of social justice education inside urban Philadelphia, the poorest large city in the United States. By aligning our vision to a social justice lens we sought to enhance equity and democracy for all—students, staff, parents and community. As Paulo Freire himself put it, education must be a transformative process—one that teaches students not only how to read the words on a page, but also to deeply understand the world in which they live (Horton and Freire, 1990). Our role as educators is to ensure our students can read both the word and the world. A Freire Schools education prepares students to learn and excel in all the ways that a traditional school should help students grow. In addition, however, we also aim to help students see the structures at play in society, challenge the status quo, and work to transform themselves and those around them in order to bring about more equity in society itself.

The Freire Schools Response
The Origin of the Charter School Model: After years of strife and underperformance in Pennsylvania public schools, the state legislature passed the “Charter School Law” in 1997, which created a new class of independent public schools with the freedom to innovate on behalf of their students.

A charter school is a tuition-free, independently operated public school with the freedom to adapt and innovate its curriculum and structure to best support its students. Charter schools each hold a contract—their “charter”—with a school district or other authorizing organization, which provides oversight and input and holds each school accountable to the high standards outlined in its charter.

Charter schools originated in Minnesota in 1991; today, more than 3 million students attend more than 7,000 charter schools across the United States. Because of the greater autonomy given to charter schools, these 7,000 schools represent a wide diversity of educational approaches and student experiences. Charter schools offer families the opportunity to choose from more than one public school option and find the school that will truly help their child thrive.

Founding Freire Charter School: As the charter school movement was beginning in Pennsylvania, a small group of entrepreneurial visionaries began designing a public charter school that would embody the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire. Freire Charter School would provide the highest quality education to all students and reject the banking model of education, wherein students are passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, Freire Charter School would be at its core student-centered—students would know that they were seen, heard and valued by their teachers and peers. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire writes, “What an educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.” Freire Charter School’s founders believed that providing avenues for students to find, develop, and share their voices would be critical to their educational experience.

Social justice literacy, engagement, and student voice have been key to the Freire Schools model from the start. Freire Charter School was designed to further explore these social justice principles by incorporating issues of identity, race, and power into each class’s learning objectives in a meaningful way.

Safe and Real: Shortly after Freire Charter School’s opening in fall 1999, Kelly Davenport, then a University of Pennsylvania doctoral student, was conducting ethnographic research at the school. She witnessed a Freire Charter School student threatening her classmate with a
knife. In the wake of this incident, Kelly surveyed Freire Charter School students about their hopes, dreams and the school environment they want to build. Their responses were clear: “No fighting.” “I have to feel safe in order to learn.” “We need to treat each other with respect.” “I know we can love each other.” Two clear themes emerged: students wanted a school that was safe and a school that was real. These needs expressed by Freire Charter School’s founding class of students became the foundation for Freire Schools’ approach and commitment to peace.

We knew early on that safety was not merely synonymous with nonviolence, although that was certainly a component. In order for students to feel safe enough to take the risks necessary for deeper learning they had to feel safe in all components of their lives. Students had to feel safe from harm in our building, they had to feel safe from hunger, they had to feel like their feelings were being protected and they were safe to be who they are, they had to feel secure asking questions and asking for help, and, most importantly, they had to feel safe in their next steps after Freire Charter School.

At the same time, Freire Charter School had to be real. This meant we needed to both meet kids where they were and also set the bar high for where they are going. Our students were acutely aware that the schools they had attended in the past could not compete with the schools their peers in more affluent areas attended. If we wanted kids to learn, we needed to establish a real learning environment—an environment of mutual respect, authentic dialogue, and high academic standards. Social justice theory emphasizes the importance of choice—and true choice is only possible when multiple options are available and accessible. For Freire Schools graduates to be able to freely choose their path after high school—whether or not that path included a college education—they needed to be fully prepared to attend and succeed in college. College prep was not included in Freire Schools’ original mission, but it was soon added to provide the real school environment our kids craved and the true choice all kids deserve.

The Freire Schools Approach

The ingredients to Freire Schools’ success are consistent with Paulo Freire’s philosophy as expressed in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Our success is dependent on building a community where everyone matters and everyone’s voice is heard. Peace, respect and humanity pervade Freire Schools’ classrooms and hallways.

The heart and soul of Freire Schools’ approach is our commitment to provide every student with the individualized resources, supports, and skills they need to succeed at Freire Schools,
in college, and beyond. Over the past twenty years, Freire Schools has developed, refined, and implemented an educational program informed by current research as well as our own experience with what works for kids. We pair high expectations for all students with robust academic and emotional supports, challenging our students to achieve at higher levels than ever before and ensuring they have the support they need to get there. Our approach is always changing, because our students are always evolving. Key elements of our approach follow.

**Commitment to Peace**

The request for safety first expressed by our founding students has evolved into a network-wide commitment to peace. Freire schools are peaceful communities. Our highest priority is making sure that students feel safe and engaged in our classrooms and throughout our schools, and that each of us has the tools and skills we need to resolve conflict peacefully. We work together as a community to create a peaceful environment in which every student can focus on themselves and their education and feel safe to take the emotional and personal risks necessary for learning. We view conflict as an opportunity for learning, growth, and positive change. Our commitment to peace at all levels of our community means that at Freire Schools, students are free to be themselves and focus on learning. Freire Schools campuses are tight-knit communities where students and staff form genuine connections and support each other as they grow.

**Emotional Support**

In practice, maintaining a community-wide commitment to peace means supporting students in accessing internal peace through counseling services and other individual supports, as well as teaching strategies for recognizing and resolving interpersonal conflicts. Freire Schools provides emotional support teams at every campus, including academic counselors, peer mediation, and thousands of hours per year of student and family therapy and wellness programming. Every member of the Freire Schools community has access to individual and family counseling services at no cost to them, group therapy, and school-based social workers. In addition to our in-house certified family therapist, Freire partners with local graduate programs in counselling psychology to provide a team of graduate students studying the science of emotional support who work with Freire students under the close direction of the Director of Emotional Support Services. At Freire Charter School, 25%-30% of students annually participate in professional individual and family counselling at no cost to them. This is a remarkable statistic, unparalleled at any peer institution. This distinguishing feature of our schools marks our deep commitment to our students’ happiness and their right to their own internal peace and self-actualization.
Peer Mediation

Peer mediation is another cornerstone of the Freire Schools culture. Mediation is a process which empowers two or more people in conflict with each other (the disputants) to work out their differences. Each year, a select handful of Freire students at each campus apply to participate and undergo rigorous training to become Peer Mediators. These student mediators work with their peers to help resolve budding conflicts and create long-term solutions. Community members can request mediation for a conflict they are involved in, or can anonymously request mediation for other members of the Freire Schools community who they believe need support in resolving a conflict. Any member of the Freire Schools community, students and staff alike, can be asked to participate in mediation. All mediation requests are reviewed within 24 hours, and a meeting is arranged between the individuals in conflict and a trained student mediator. Together, the disputants and their mediator work to arrive at a peaceful solution that meets everyone’s needs, and build a framework for long-term growth and mutual understanding.

Preparing Every Student for College

Since the opening of the first Freire Schools campus in 1999, the intent of the Freire Schools educational program has been to serve primarily educationally disadvantaged students—students considered at risk of academic failure based on their demographics, disability, or prior educational achievement. Many students come to Freire having already been taught to believe that they are not capable of thriving in high school, let alone college. Our paramount goal is to help our students learn, achieve, and transform their sense of themselves and of their futures—to raise their expectations about what they can be, in school and beyond. This means equipping every student with the tools they need to access college and thrive there.

At Freire Schools, college prep means preparing students for “Graduation x2” — ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to graduate from high school AND to persist in and graduate from college. To achieve this goal, the Freire Schools academic program is a challenging liberal arts program that encourages students to think critically and scientifically, communicate effectively, read and synthesize complex texts, and apply the skills and knowledge they acquire in the classroom to real-world situations.

Integrated and comprehensive academic and emotional supports help to ensure that our students are succeeding in school and developing the skills and knowledge they will need in college. Every Freire Schools student has a dedicated Academic Advisor who supports academic growth
by tracking academic progress, communicating with families in times of concern, and linking students to extra help, resources, and support. College Counselors help students plan for college, find the right school, and apply for scholarships and financial aid. Freire students also have access to daily after-school Academic Centers, where teachers and peers offer subject-specific tutoring and homework help.

Many students come to Freire Schools several grade levels behind in math and reading. With constant, individualized support, Freire students don’t just catch up—they begin to truly thrive.

**Connecting our Classrooms to the World:** Freire Schools believes that knowledge is brought to life by action and experience. We strive to develop our students’ understanding of themselves as part of their world, and to create learning experiences that center on real-world communication and action. We achieve this through a range of trips, on-site courses, internships, mentorship programs, dual enrollment programs, and extracurricular programs that emphasize hands-on learning – bringing our classrooms to the world and the world to our classrooms. At the same time, experiential learning such as this provides opportunities for students to develop the skills necessary for success in the 21st century economy -- creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication.

In a flattened and global economy, experiential learning prepares students for rewarding work, a steady income, and self-sufficiency. In response to this understanding, Freire Schools provides comprehensive experiential learning experiences made possible through creative partnerships with a diverse portfolio of community organizations. These community partnerships enable us to take learning outside the classroom and connect students to the arts, athletics, sciences, technology, and more. Research suggests clearly that these types of experiential learning are key to preparing students for life, developing the critical intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

**Specially Designed Curriculum:** As a college prep school, Freire Charter School offers elements of a traditional liberal arts program (reading, math, science, history, foreign language) designed to develop well-rounded learners and to ensure that our students are competitive when applying for college. The mandate for standardized testing, also requires us to devote a good deal of instructional time in core content areas.

At the same time, Freire Schools believes we have a moral imperative to provide our students with a rigorous, culturally responsive, and high interest curriculum that fosters our students growth into critical thinkers, readers, doers, knowers, visionaries, scientists, and good citizens.
ready to build the future. In practice, this means that Freire Schools both ensures that our core content courses are meeting this bar and also designs specific courses aligned with our social justice mission. At the middle school campus this includes a year-long character development course. At the high school students tackle issues of race and bias in a Mass Media that also develops students as public speakers. Courses introduce students to issues of identity, injustice and inequality, resistance and nonviolence, criminal justice, rhetoric and propaganda, and social protest.

At Freire Charter School the capstone course is Peace and Social Change. In this course students explore American and global culture, building their own convictions and self-truths in order to confidently embark on their own journeys of meaningful social action. The course has a strong emphasis on reading about and responding to social issues, drawing upon historical context, critical theory, human psychology, government and sociology, artistic impact, and peace studies as tools of analysis and discussion. Students read about Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. This course also has a strong research component so that our young adults refine their ability to critically gather and analyze relevant sources in order to take a confident stance on topics of their choosing. At the end, the course helps students turn their thoughts, discussions, writings, and beliefs into meaningful social action in the world through a final project that includes a written component, a presentation, and associated community service.

By helping students find their voice and agency, it is our intent that education will have a democratizing effect, creating a culture where everyone matters. Paulo Freire believed that the oppressed live in a “culture of silence.” Education allows our students to overcome this silence and become free.

**Freire Family**

At Freire Schools, we have a saying— “Freire = Family.” Freire Schools takes a proactive approach to creating a strong community culture built on mutual respect, openness, and honesty, where every individual is seen and valued. We insist that every member of our community be accepted at face value, without judgment, and be supported in inhabiting their fullest self. Our connections create our community. As a Freire Family, our shared struggles, joy, challenges, and successes give us strength.

The Freire Family is wide-reaching and inclusive. It includes our families who choose to send their kids to our schools and are our most vital partners in education. It includes our business
and community partners who provide opportunities for students to apply their learning outside the classroom. And, it includes our all-volunteer Boards of Directors who ensure that we advance our mission and have the resources we need to actualize our goals. But, the heart of the Freire Family is our students and our staff.

**Community & Student Demographics**

Freire Charter School is located in the Center City section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia is the sixth largest city in the United States, and Center City is the business, tourism, and arts hub for the city and one of the most affluent parts of the city. Our decision to locate here was intentional; we wanted students from all parts of the city to feel part of the daily vibrancy of the city, be easily draw upon the abundant community resources and experiences, and even learn the life skill of commuting via public transportation.

At the same time that we are located in an economic hub, Freire Charter School was founded with the intent to serve primarily educationally disadvantaged students. We draw students from almost every zip code in the city with a high concentration of students from the city’s most underserved communities. Of Freire Schools’ 2,000 total students, 89% are Black or Latinx, and almost all students qualify as economically disadvantaged. Additionally, the percent of students with disabilities rose sharply in 2015-16 and has averaged 20% since then.

While our students are often defined by what they lack -- a deficit mentality we work to overturn every day -- our Freire Schools students are confident, dynamic, and collaborative individuals. They are engaged in their communities, and excited to apply the skills and knowledge they acquire with Freire Schools to create new possibilities for our futures. We combine high expectations with robust supports to provide each Freire student with the challenges and resources they need to succeed. Our schools are joyous but challenging, respectful and fun, and our students frequently comment on how much they appreciate being able to learn in an environment where they are loved and supported

**“Freire in Your Heart”**

Perhaps the most consistent description of Freire Schools, since its inception, is that our schools’ spirit of respect, love and positivity is plainly apparent even to first-time visitors. In far too many schools in the School District of Philadelphia, students and staff experience regular tensions, distractions, and the threat of violence. Freire Charter School students often refer to these experiences when discussing schools they attended prior to Freire, or the schools they would have attended if they had not gotten into Freire through the lottery system. One sixth
Grader interviewed referred repeatedly to the “discombobulation” of her old school. Others talked about teachers “not caring” and schools passing students along to the next grade without regard to whether they had actually learned the material. Violence, or the threat of violence, was highlighted by everyone interviewed. District-run schools do, of course, have many devoted teachers who care deeply about their students and continue to have an incredibly positive impact on their students. These teachers’ invaluable service and talent makes a real difference in environments of hardship, shortages and challenge. We believe that all of us—teachers and students alike—deserve schools in which we are actively supported in achieving success.

When a visitor walks through Freire, what is evident is that teaching and learning are actively taking place. Classrooms and hallways are filled with smiling faces and students who engage joyfully with their teachers and each other, eager to achieve. Students and adults throughout the school building speak respectfully to each other. Laughter between classes and at lunch is the norm. A Freire Charter School alumna who now teaches math at the school attributes much of her success in college to Freire Charter School’s atmosphere of relaxed yet serious engagement. In addition to the high standard of academic preparation, she learned to ask adults and peers for help when she needed to. Another recent graduate of Freire claims he learned to network amongst adults and peers at Freire, which put him on a path to a fulfilling career in technology. Students at all levels clearly appreciated the balance of structure, safety, congeniality and caring. Students, staff and alumnae refer affectionately to the Freire community as their “Freire Family.”

In a recent staff interview, one longtime administrator described his years at Freire School, referring repeatedly to “Freire in your heart.” Asked to explain what he meant by this phrase, he talked about a caring and passion for students and colleagues that defied precise description. Amongst colleagues, according to Mr. Darryl, it is compassion that prioritizes the students’ well-being and success. It is a connection amongst adults that is not about race, ethnicity, gender or other descriptors but is simply about children, and particularly children from the challenged world that they face in their frequently violence-ridden, under-resourced neighborhoods. According to Mr. Darryl, “Students feel it—Freire in your heart—and fit in happily to a place that welcomes, supports and challenges them every day. The result is a learning community that is secure, enriching, serious and joyful.”

**Challenges**
The experience of serving our amazing students has been joyful, but the challenges we have faced and continue to confront are real. On any given day we are faced with meeting the varied and complex needs of our students (from special learning needs to physical needs), educational challenges (e.g. national teacher shortage), financial concerns (e.g. lack of funding for charter school facilities), and political crises that challenge our ability to operate.

High Stakes Testing

When the Pennsylvania Charter School Law was passed in 1997, the legislative intent was to improve pupil learning, increase learning opportunities for all pupils, encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, and create new professional opportunities for teachers. It was not enough for charter schools to merely replicate the educational model of traditional public schools; they were to serve as incubators for innovation.

The structure of charter schools was intended to give these new public schools greater flexibility to deliver innovative educational programming, such as Freire Charter School’s social justice education model. However, charter schools came into being during the same time as a national movement toward increased accountability for school performance. On its face, this was a good thing. In practice, it meant a national shift toward high-stakes standardized testing.

This shift was codified in the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002. NCLB aimed to improve individual education outcomes for all students by setting high standards and measurable goals. States were required to develop an annual assessment system, and schools that consistently did not meet performance targets could face reconstitution (i.e. hiring a new school leader) or closure.

NCLB was designed to make sure that schools could not focus solely on improving results for the highest performers; all students needed to show growth. But this law that had an admirable intent, created, in reality an inflated emphasis on standardized testing, specifically in math and English language arts.

Across the country, kids, parents, and schools were feeling the pressure to perform. In charters the stakes were higher, because the charter school model requires school reauthorization every three to five years. During each reauthorization cycle, a school must demonstrate student achievement and growth, defined almost entirely by performance on standardized tests.

Freire Schools is committed to grow and develop all parts of a student inside our school, not just the academic pieces that these standardized tests evaluate. As such, it is a challenge to
balance our social justice model with the do-or-die need to perform well on these high stakes standardized tests. In some places, these goals overlap; in others, they do not. Nevertheless, Freire Charter School must learn to operate within this chasm, and to ensure our students succeed not just at one, but at both levels.

**Safety & Discipline**

The core of Freire Schools’ mission is to create a safe and peaceful learning environment for our students, most of whom are African-American and come from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, our schools exist in the context of American society, in which students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately likely to face harsh discipline at school and to become incarcerated. Studies have connected this disparity to increasing intersection between the United States’ public school and incarceration systems. In recent decades, strict policies and methods intended to help reduce violence in schools have instead had the effect of criminalizing Black and brown students’ actions and pushing students towards incarceration. How can we ensure that we guarantee each of our students a truly safe and peaceful school community while actively combating the tendency of strict school discipline policies to harm Black and brown students?

We strive to create a strong school culture of respect, freedom and dignity for all community members. Rather than simply imposing behavioral standards and penalizing students who do not or cannot conform, we aim to provide students and staff with the resources, education and support they need in order to fully invest in and uphold our shared community standards. No-cost emotional support and family therapy services support our students in accessing internal peace, meeting individual students where they are and helping them learn the skills they need to personally invest in maintaining peace in our community. Our student-run Peer Mediation program makes students the leaders of efforts to build and maintain peace, emphasizing students’ agency in identifying budding conflicts and working together to develop long-term solutions. Freire Charter School staff engage in professional development sessions focusing on cultural competency and fighting implicit and explicit racism in the classroom. In sharp contrast to most public schools in the city of Philadelphia, Freire Schools campuses do not use metal detectors or x-ray scanning equipment, nor do we employ school police officers. Instead, we build peace and safety from within each individual member of our community, focusing on developing meaningful, trusting relationships among staff and students.
However, Freire Schools is still an urban public school with a majority-Black student body and strict standards for student behavior. Any student or staff member who joins the Freire community brings their own subconscious biases and assumptions about how Black and brown students will be treated in school. Our work to improve our ability to guarantee high standards of safety to our students—in a way that uplifts them rather than penalizing them—is never over. Our ongoing self-improvement efforts include increased staff professional development on cultural competency, as well as mindful revisions to our discipline policy and approach that emphasize student agency and freedom.

**Scarcity Mindset**

With almost all of our students qualifying as economically disadvantaged under federal government guidelines and hailing from neighborhoods that have weathered historic and systemic hardship, one of our initial and ongoing challenges has been combatting the scarcity mindset in our students. Many of our students come to us experiencing real needs—the need for greater financial resources, the need for food security, the need for reliable housing, the need for consistent and high quality health care, etc. The emphasis on what is missing and what is needed can be so strong that it depletes our students’ bandwidth for growth and learning, similar to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy which states that people must have their physiological, safety, and love needs met before the can build esteem and achieve self-actualization.

Our students are not alone. Public education is vastly underfunded in the United States with stark disparities between urban schools and their more affluent peers. Urban teachers frequently live in the reality of scarce resources—insufficient books and technology, poor quality facilities, insufficient support staff, and, often, poor compensation for their efforts. In this environment of not enough, teachers can also spend much time concentrating on what is not available at the expense of time spent on planning instruction, engaging with kids, and refining their craft.

From the outset, Freire Schools wanted to create an abundance mindset at our schools. Students would have safe buildings, abundant loving adults, access to academic and emotional support, free and nutritious meals, space for safe after school enrichment, etc. Staff would be fairly compensated, want for no essential instructional resources, have a safe and respectful work environment, and have significant opportunities to learn and grow as educators. While we do not have excess, we strive on an ongoing basis to allocate resources in such a way that our students and staff feel like their immediate needs are being met while at Freire Schools and that they are building the skills and knowledge to carry this abundance mindset outside our walls.
Trauma

Too many Freire students are exposed to community violence, poverty, hunger, maltreatment, neglect and unstable living conditions. Responding to trauma is an essential part of our education model, taking care to understand how our students’ lives shape their learning. A child’s experiences with trauma can challenge his/her sense of safety and the ability to trust and take healthy risks, and when confronted with stress, change, such feelings can trigger aggression and violence.

As an educational institution, Freire Schools cannot address every community need. But there are ways that we respond to the challenges that our children face, help them to understand their value, and potential to carry out our mission and commitment to non-violence.

In 2018-19, all incoming Freire Charter School 9th graders were given an anonymous 38-question Student Lives Survey. The survey results revealed that most students entering our high school have had serious adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Growing percentages of students report mental health symptoms severe enough to impair their functioning in school or potentially present risk to their or others’ safety. By the start of high school, 97% of students reported experiencing AT LEAST one of the following:

- Sexual abuse
- Having seen someone shot or stabbed
- The loss of a loved one
- The incarceration of a member of their family
- Physical violence in their home
- Witnessing physical violence in the home
- Severe financial hardship
- Living with a family member who was depressed/mentally ill/suicidal
- Living with a family member who was too drunk or high to care for them
- Being arrested

Excluding loss of a loved one, financial hardship, and arrest, the percentage of students with one ACE was still a staggering 81%. 54% of students experienced 2 or more ACEs. 18% reported 4 or more.

It is not possible to shield our children from all aspects of violence and pain, but we are working to provide a safe community that is responsive to their current needs and helps them to build
resilience, self-knowledge, an understanding of their own potential, and the ability to find peaceful solutions to conflicts. Our free, year-round Emotional Supports programs are an innovative response to that need. However, adopting trauma-informed educational practices and training staff to assist students with this widespread trauma is an increasing need for our schools.

**Politics**

At the same time that Freire Schools is working to inspire youth and prepare them for the future, promote social justice, and battle these abundant challenges, there is an ongoing battle for our existence. Support for charter schools has traditionally been very polarized. Critics suggest that charter schools are taking money away from already financially strapped traditional public schools, and that charter schools’ performance has been mixed. Charter supporters emphasize that charters are public schools, that they are safe, and that the demand for charters far exceeds the number of spaces available in them.

Nationally, charter schools were conceived as a vehicle to provide families with a choice in where their students are educated. The idea was that the taxpayer dollars that fund the public school system should follow each individual child to the school of their choosing, rather than the government dictating which school they must attend.

The nature of the Pennsylvania Charter School Law requires us to apply for reauthorization every five years. At these junctures, the School District of Philadelphia reviews our academic, operational, and financial performance. What is, in theory, an impartial assessment of our performance, is in reality frequently a political fight.

While we work continuously at the local level to retain our charter, Pennsylvania’s state-level Charter School Law is frequently under threat of moratoriums on charters, cuts in charter school funding, and school closures. So, just as we prepare our students in the art of social protest, we regularly have to engage the entire Freire family in advocacy in support of our school. The time this political fight takes is time that we are not able to concentrate on educating kids but is necessary to ensure that we can serve them in years to come.

**Vision for the Future**

As we reflect upon the past twenty years, we must also necessarily look to the years ahead of us. We remain steadfast in our dedication to provide safe, enriching schools in which students...
are actively engaged in their own education, challenged to achieve at the highest standards, and nurtured to become lifelong learners.

Freire Schools’ vision for tomorrow is for our students continue to learn and grow as much as they can inside our schools, and by so doing transform themselves, their communities, and society in a more equitable way. These students will continue to take on roles in our government as decision-makers, as well as becoming doctors, inventors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, astronauts and more. We intend for this to happen generation after generation, with Freire Schools graduates becoming adults and sending their own children to Freire Schools, who in turn graduate and continue the cycle. With each generation, the families, neighborhoods, and the cities we serve take on more equity, and our students and their families have a truly fair chance to break the cycle of poverty.

Our vision is also that Freire Schools teachers and our schools themselves transform into hubs of hands-on and experiential learning, where teachers are trained in the art of teaching from day one without reverting to the traditional stand and deliver “banking” (Freire, 1970) style of instruction. Instead, our teachers provide a platform, structure, experience, and a guiding hand for students to build their knowledge, deeply relating to the material at hand, to each other, and to their environment.

Ultimately, our vision for the future is to enrich and expand our Freire family. We aim to continue to provide the excellent and enriching education in a safe and compassionate environment that is characteristic of our current schools. We envision extending our educational program to include younger students, including the Pre-K and elementary school levels, while also extending upwards to provide continued support for our graduates through their college years to assure a good transition and ongoing success. The goal is for Freire Schools to eventually serve a full continuum of services from toddler to college student. And as we grow, we must continue our pledge to social justice for all. This is a clear call for education that leads to opportunity for all sectors of society.

**Conclusion**

The story of Freire Schools is rich and multi-tiered. It is a journey that includes thousands of people building a community in a challenging environment, always maintaining their focus on the education and welfare of our students. Central to our success and our schools’ ongoing impact—the driving force from conceptualization of the very first Freire school through to our
twentieth year with four thriving schools—is our limitless passion and devotion to our students’ wellbeing, along with a relentless commitment to excellence in education and opportunity for all.

**Bibliography**

