First part

Theoretical issues

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The big picture: Meeting educational challenges in an increasing multicultural world

abstract

From 80's, the research on intercultural education has discussed it potential to introduce dialogue among civilizations, in order to reduce conflict, and preventing the perception of otherness as a menace. Nowadays, that position has developed, leaving behind the idea of cultures classification for a new point of view, -the one is introduced in the PERMIT case-. Namely, the position of culture as something dynamic, continuously evolving, and created on the bases of dialogue and interaction; this is the notion of culture as a *forum* (Bruner, 1988 -2003-, 152), which in time introduces a conception of teaching and learning practices as main activities to rethink and rebuild cultures (Margiotta, 2007). In fact, the attempt of research in a number of educational contexts is entirely devoted to show how cultural values, opinions and attitudes (representing cultural identity) can be discovered and re-negotiated through new pedagogic practices (Minello, 2008). This evolving concept is present in several focal research fields of intercultural education, that are summarily presented in this chapter: curriculum research, teaching methods, new learning environments, the achievement of intercultural competence, and teachers' professionalism. The attempt here is, while introducing these topics, to depict the foundations of research that impulsed PERMIT's project experimentation.

Dai primi 80, la ricerca sull'educazione interculturale ha discusso il proprio potenziale per introdurre il dialogo fra le civilità, in ordine a ridurre il conflitto, mirando a limitare la percezione dell'alterità come minaccia. Oggigiorno, questo punto di vista è stato sviluppato, lasciandosi dietro l'idea della classificazione delle culture, per un nuovo punto di vista – quello introdotto dal progetto PERMIT –. E cioè che le culture sono qualcosa di dinamico, continuamente in evoluzione, generate sulle basi del dialogo e l'interazione: la nozione di cultura come forum (Bruner, 1988 -2003-, 152), che a suo tempo introduce la nozione di pratiche insegnamento e apprendimento come attività principale per ripensare una cultura di apprendimento (Margiotta, 2007). In effetti, un significativo numero di esperienze educative sono interamente dedicate a capire come valori, opinioni ed attitudini (rappresentanti di un'identità culturale) possono essere esplorate e scoperte, nonché rinegoziate, attraverso l'innovazione didattica e nei processi di apprendimento (Minello, 2008). Questo concetto in evoluzione è presente in diversi ambiti focalizzati di ricerca sull'educazione interculturale, che vengono introdotti in modo sommario in questo articolo; e cioè, dalla ricerca sul curriculum, alla ricerca didattica, su processi di apprendimento, sull'analisi e sviluppo della competenza interculturale, e sulla professionalità degli insegnanti con riguardo a questo settore. Si punta così a introdurre, attraverso queste tematiche, I fondamentali che hanno impulsato la sperimentazione proposta dal progetto PERMIT.

Key Words: Intercultural Education, teaching methods, intercultural competence, enlarged cultural context of learning.

1. From the clash of Cultures to a new culture of education for intercultural dialogue

Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington introduced the notion of "Clash of Civilization"s funding the idea that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world.

The theory was originally formulated in a 1992 lecture at the American Enterprise Institute, which was then developed in a 1993 Foreign Affairs article titled "The Clash of Civilizations?"[1] in response to Francis Fukuyama's 1992 book, The End of History and the Last Man.

Huntington later expanded his thesis in a 1996 book The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, which could be illustrated with his own words

> *"It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future".*

Huntington believed that while the age of ideology had ended, the world had only reverted to a normal state of affairs characterized by cultural conflict. In his thesis, he argued that the primary axis of conflict in the future would be along cultural and religious lines.

As an extension, he posits that the concept of different civilizations, as the highest rank of cultural identity, will become increasingly useful in analyzing the potential for conflict.

Civilizations may consist of states and social groups (such as ethnic and religious minorities).

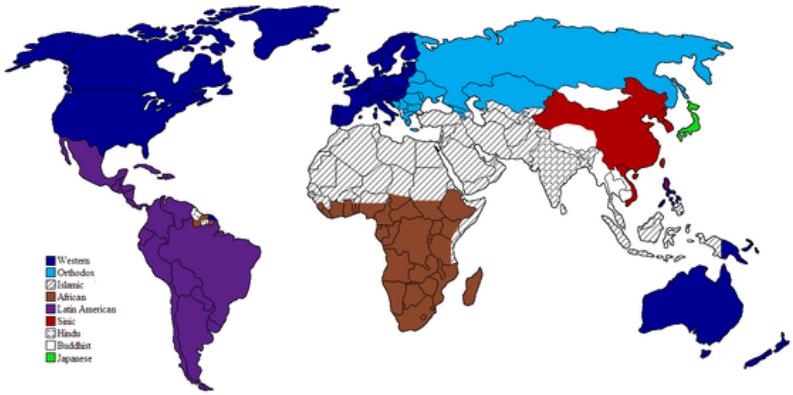


Figure 1 – Huntington's Map

1 Article published by Foreign Affairs online Journal, The Council of Foreign Regions, Summer 1993 -http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/48950/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations – Accessed 21 May 2009.

Predominant religion seems to be the main criterion of his classification, but in some cases geographical proximity and linguistic similarity are important as well. Using various studies of history, Huntington divided the world into the "major" civilizations in his thesis as it's illustrated in the map (figure 1)

Iranian leader Mohammad Khatami introduced the idea of Dialogue Among Civilizations as a response to the theory of Clash of Civilizations. The term "Dialogue among Civilizations" became more known after the United Nations adopted a resolution to name the year 2001 as the year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

The belief of Western world in the universality of the West's values and political systems is naïve and continued insistence on democratization and such "universal" norms will only further antagonize other civilizations. Huntington sees the West as reluctant to accept this because it built the international system, wrote its laws, and gave it substance in the form of the United Nations.

Huntington identifies a major shift of economic, military, and political power from the West to the other civilizations of the world, most significantly to what he identifies as the two "challenger civilizations", Sinic and Islam.

Huntington's conception of the world, represent a picture of current cultural forces and power game driving relations among civilizations. What Huntington vision seems to miss is the potential of education to intervene in post-conflict societies. In fact, the arena of intercultural education will be prepare individuals, as part of these civilizations, to dialogue and reduce conflict, preventing to perceive otherness as a menace.

Nevertheless, the concept of culture classification need to be contested from another point of view, – the one is introduced in the PERMIT case –: this is the position of culture as something alive, continuously evolving, and created on the bases of dialogue and interaction: the notion of culture as a *forum* (Bruner, 1988 - 2003-, 152), and the notion of teaching and learning practices as the main activities to rethink and rebuild cultures (Margiotta, 2007). In fact, the attempt of the experiences introduced in a number of educational contexts is entirely devoted to show how values, opinions and attitudes (representations of cultural identity) can be discovered and re-negotiated through new pedagogic practices (Minello, 2008), even when, considering other famous approaches on cultures classification, they represent a *software of the mind*[2].

2 We refer to the very well known approach of the anthropologist Geert Hofstede, who developed a classification of cultures. Dr. Hofstede conducted perhaps the most comprehensive study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. From 1967 to 1973, while working at IBM as a consultant in human resources development, having to face several conflict in intercultural communication, he collected and analyzed data from over 100,000 individuals from forty countries. From those results, and later additions (1995-2005) , Hofstede developed a model that identifies four primary dimensions to differentiate cultures: Power Distance, Individualism-Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Maculinity-Feminility. He later added a fifth dimension, Long-term Outlook, when collaborating with a colleague from Hong Kong University, and in relation with Confucian cultures.As with any generalized study, the results may or may not be applicable to specific individuals or events. In addition, although the Hofstede's results are categorized by country, often there is more than one cultural group within that country. In these cases there may be significant deviation from the study's result. Hofstede's approach insist on the importance of getting to know other culture

The risk of culture classification, when introduced in educational contexts, is to bring a set of binary oppositions as consequence of comparisons between the behaviors of individuals who are themselves positioned as generalized microcosms of particular "civilizations" or "national values". This approach has been characterized by Hewling as "essentialist" (2005), in the sense of it too reductive conception of what cultural identity is and what it produces in the individual. In fact, according to Hewling (2005) it generates a number of complications:

- It assumes that behavior observed in one national may be used under similar conditions to predict the behavior of another
- It assumes that individuals identify themselves primarily in terms of their membership in a cultural grouping labeled externally as a particular nation state;
- while stressing similarities among members of a national group, it emphasizes difference at the point of intersection with any other group (or member of that other group).

Therefore, an intercultural approach to education, based on the premises of *dialogue among differences and construction,* represents the most appropriate response to the challenges of globalization and complexity (Portera, 2008). It offers means to gain a complete and thorough understanding of the concepts of democracy and pluralism, as well as a different customs, traditions, faiths and values. Intercultural education helps to identify the risks of globalization and multicultural communities; of economically motivated rules and regulations, without any intervention by governments and /or politics. Intercultural education approach, taking into account the diversities that are involved and interacting in an educational setting, could allow a more inclusive view of society, respectful of differences, and eager to build new horizons of (inter) culture, without falling into the *melting pot* identity, but recovering memory and identity.

2. "Living together as Equals in Dignity": new approaches for an intercultural understanding

In stressing the importance of interculturalism within education, we should understand, first of all, that interculturalism is not one aspect of educational provision; and secondly, that is a complex concept in social sciences, which need to be well defined in order to address practices.

> *Within the first dimension, it's to be considered that interculturalism is not a subject which can be given timetable time alongside all the others, nor is it appropriate to one phase of education only. Interculturalism is a theme, prob-*

dimensions as a "software of the mind", to better understand other's actions as coming from a different cultural matrix. He emphasize the idea of cultural values as something deepen root on behavior patterns of individuals, since they are not conscious. Our critic to this study is the inflexibility of culture to be modified, recreated, meanings renegotiated, leading to put "labels" to other cultures as rigid entities. Instead of that, awareness and metacognitive reflection on cultural values can lead individuals to adopt new patterns of communication and behaviour, recreating, through interaction, new culture.

ably the major theme, which needs to inform the teaching and learning of all subjects…If education is no intercultural, it is probably not education, but rather the inculcation of nationalist or religious fundamentalism. (Coulby, 2006).

According to these ideas, the theorization of intercultural education, is not simply a matter of normative exhortation, of spotting good practice in one area and helping to implement it in another. It involves the reconceptualization of what schools and universitities have done in the past and what they are capable of doing in the present and the future. If we want to build on an intercultural approach of education in order to promote intercultural dialogue, we need to be able to draw on a range of histories, contexts and practices and put one alongside another in order to facilitate understanding and, potentially, development. Which is clearly a complex task, that PERMIT project probably faced in part, as good or maybe excellent practice of training, teaching, and researching in a shared framework. A shared framework that could build new horizons of intercultural dialogue.

There's the need of define "intercultural" which is a term plenty of meanings, applied differently in the several scenarios of education and social policies.

The terminological shift from multicultural to intercultural education, which occurred rather swiftly over twenty years ago, was accepted at the time unquestioningly and apparently without hesitation[3]. The shift coincided, either side of

3 An educational approach to the phenomenon of diversity emerged in the 70s, in industrialized countries with high flows of immigration. In the USA and Canada,with the first scientific articles and contributions in the early 1970s, and is still a widely used term. Curricula on multicultural education were introduced in Canada in the 1970s, mainly in response to Franco-Canadian movements and other anti-anglicising minorities. Even in Australia, the first educational answers on a multicultural level arrived in the 1970s. The concept of intercultural education has only begun to take root in English-speaking countries during the past few years (Gundara 2000, Sleeter and Grant 2007). In Europe, mainly in countries like France, Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands, the first problem identified by policy makers and educators, was the "pedagogy of reception": on the one hand, developmental measures for learning the host countries languages were put in place; on the other hand a great deal of emphasis was placed on giving children the opportunity to preserve their languages and cultures of origin, so that a return to their native country could become possible at any time. Also during this time, numerous projects were created which could be termed multicultural: the main aim was getting to know about commonalities and differences on a linguistic, religious and cultural level. In the 1970s, some countries even saw the creation of new subjects due to the growing numbers of foreign children in schools, whose goal was the realisation of specific, separate measures of intervention for foreign children (Portera, op.cit).
The new concept of trans-national, European identity emerging in the wider European context encompassed more critics to the concept of multiculturality, considering the risks of an assimilatory pedagogy, in open conflict with mobility and collaboration across European Union. In fact by the 80s, theoretical considerations and practical intervention strategies on an intercultural pedagogy started to grow in research about school education (Portera 2003a, 6-26; 2006a, 89-100).
Even when the Council of Europe adopted the strategy of multiculturalism and multicultural pedagogy in the 1970s, through a resolution (no. 35) of Conference of Ministers, focusing on the entry age of migrant worker children into schools of the member states, the vision was put on integration to the complex industrial societies of Europe in respect of their own cultural backgrounds, maintaining cultural and linguistic links to the country of origin, so as to facilitate possible school reintegration in case of re-entering the original countries. Fur-

1980, with attack of multicultural education from two directions. First, the familiar nationalist concern that school practices and knowledge should embody those of the state and only the state in terms of language(s) religion, culture or values, according to the context. Secondly, from a more pluralist position, the concern multicultural education did not sufficiently directly address issues of racism and that it offered only a tokenistic understanding of non-dominant knowledge, denigrating cultural difference to the study of samoas, saris and steel bands (Mullard, 1980, quoted in Coulby, op.cit). While the terminological shift did not resolve these two sets of concerns, it seemed to offer a fresh start and one less influenced by the previously dominant and self contained theory and practice emanating from the USA and the UK. The council of Europe did a great contribution to this shifting scenery (Gobbo, 2004).

Promoting intercultural dialogue contributes to the core objective of the Council of Europe, namely preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

In 2008, following a wide scale consultation on intercultural dialogue ensued between January and June 2007, the Council of Europe launched the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" which aims to address main policy actions in the social and educational field.

One of the recurrent themes of the consultation was that old approaches to the management of cultural diversity were no longer adequate to societies in which

ther conferences (Bern, 1973; Strasbourg, 1974; Stokholm, 1975; Oslo, 1976) addressed problems relating to the education of migrant workers, as well as the possibility of maintaining one's links with languages and countries of origin. Lately, between 1977 and 1983 ,under the direction of L. Porcher and Micheline Rey, a working group which aim was to examine teacher education in Europe with respect to methods and strategies to manage with cultural diversity was set up. And in 1983, (Dublin Conference), the European ministers for education highlighted the importance of the intercultural dimension of education while considering the integration of migrant children. It followed a recommendation for teacher education based on intercultural communication. After these important events, the Council of Europe has been continually promoting projects for education, defining it as intercultural rather than "multicultural" (Portera, 2008). Taking into account Rey's recommendations in 90's, Portera stresses that in those years the intercultural perspective as educational and political phenomenon emerged; in fact, for the Council of Europe, interactions contribute to the development of co-operation and solidarity rather than to relations of domination, conflict, rejection, and exclusion (Foucher 1994). Of particular significance were studies concerning Human Rights and minorities; identity, as the complex (plural) identity, referring to elements (values, symbols, any kind of cultural feature) of various cultures and individuals. All this background helped to move on from the idea of a sole economical/financial and destructive globalization were dialogue and intercultural understanding could generate a second globalization of access to knowledge and tolerance.
Consistently, the Council of Europe established the project Education for democratic citizenship in co-operation with several transnational entities, namely, the European Commission, UNESCO, World Bank, OSCE, UNICEF, Soros Foundation, etc. (1997-2008) aiming to raise awareness of civic and human rights, as well as responsibilities encompassed in life in the democratic society. The most recent Council of Europe projects carry the following titles: Intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention (2002-2004); Youth building peace and intercultural dialogue; Heritage classes international exchanges; The new challenge of intercultural education, religious diversity and dialogue in Europe in co-operation with UNESCO and ALECSO (since 2003); and lately, it has given support to the Intercultural year of European Commission (2007) and the ongoing year of fight against poverty and social exclusion in the EU (2010).

the degree of that diversity (rather than its existence) was unprecedented and ever-growing.

In fact, achieving inclusive societies needed a new approach, and intercultural dialogue was the route to follow, overcoming approaches such as those of cultural assimilation or multiculturalism.

> *"There was…a notable lack of clarity as to eat that phrase might mean. The consultation document invited respondents to give definition, and there was a marked reluctance to do so. In part this is because intercultural dialogue is not a new tablet of stone, amenable to a simple definition which can be applied without mediation in all concrete situations. In part, this indicated a genuine uncertainty as to what intercultural dialogue meant in practice"* (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008: 9).

The effort of the Council of Europe is the definition of interculturalism as a part of promoting living together in a very complex and diverse societies. The effort of providing definitions is appreciable, since them compose a base to dialogue, and through it definitions could be re-addressed. The risks of non-dialogue are considerable: not to engage in dialogue makes it easy to develop a stereotypical perception of the other build up a climate of mutual suspicion, tension and anxiety, use minorities as scapegoats, and generally foster intolerance and discrimination.

Therefore, intercultural dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It operates at all levels – within societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world.

The discussion and changing representations of concepts in academic and international contexts, let us imagine the problem in the concrete practices and educational research activities. In fact, it should be payed careful attention in order to define clearly the several assumptions that underlie exploration of practices and discourses about cultural values and intercultural dialogue, in order to avoid overcome conceptions of "culture" and "cultural contact/interaction". Prejudices and common places could guide activities at school more strongly than clear conceptions about the complex issue of dialogue of differences, and construction of new learning cultures.

3. Intercultural dialogue across educational systems: the status quaestionis

More than in any other place, diversity has entered in classrooms. The many cultural backgrounds that lead kids, parents and teachers are reading facts and practices are revealed by the declination of "well founded" beliefs in traditional education: academic success, intelligence, learning performance, didactics, teaching. The discussion, as we have seen above, is not new at all; which is rather new, is the dimension of the multicultural phenomenon, once focused on rich countries that concentrated immigration flows, or ex-colonialist countries, that considered their relations center-periphery. The problem of a multicultural society, and therefore the challenge that education has to face, is completely renewed, not only because of migrations or ethnic conflicts, but also because of the accent put on discover-

ing and promoting cultural identities based on neohumanistic values; hence, a new vision of humankind, in a planet that appears to be smaller and smaller: a planetary identity, in E. Morin's words (Morin, 2003).

Again, this kind of vision attempts to overcome the "essentialist" position, that equates culture with nationality. In fact, the aim is to think interpersonal interaction that encompass the whole complexity of cultural influences and determinants brought into play by the key players in that interaction, in constructing something new, that takes to a broader vision of *being*.

Cormeraie (1998) underlines a dangerous tendency in teaching to view other cultures from an ethnocentric perspective and states categorically:

> *"Teaching about other cultures as a strategy for reducing prejudice does not work. Nor does it address the issue of cultural bias which can be detected in those selected aspects of the other culture that teachers ethnocentrically choose to indict or advocate in their course reinforcing in so doing stereotypes and polarities"* (Cormerai 1998 – quoted in Toll, S. 2000: 2-).

This kind of approach bring new light to the curriculum organisation and learning design processes: from one hand, there is the need of more active participation into meaining making processes (creating culture, from a *constructionist* point of view); from the other hand, it seems necessary to understand and *deconstruct* meaning coming from nodes of human knowledge as result of historic and social processes of reification (Raffaghelli, 2010).

This introduces two important sides of an intercultural approach: the first, relating to *didactics* or transversal approach to organizing teaching and learning; the second, relating to a critical approach to the discipline, considering not only knowledge but also epistemological and socio-historical foundations of knowledge taught.

Needless to say, this represents a revolution for national curriculum. In the latest years, across national curriculums, several issues have been raised in order to promote intercultural dialogue.

In the following paragraphs, it will be introduced a very summarized picture of the state of art about the educational shifting towards a *planetary education*.

A) Improving the quality of education through the diversification of contents and methods and the promotion of universally-shared values (Morin, 2003; Carneiro, 2007)

1. Strengthening of democratic citizenship and respect for human rights trough education.

Empowering each individual to become an active participant in a democratic society is a basic prerequisite for the construction of a peaceful society that manages its internal conflicts in a non-violent way. It is necessary to revise educational policies, produce up to date teaching and learning materials and organize appropriate in-service-teacher-training programmes. Educational networking among schools of neighboring countries and other regions may be an important point of beginning, eliminating elements leading to segregation of the various communities (Council of Europe, All Equal-All Different Project, 2008).

2. Dialogue among civilizations

> "Our village or district has become global, and we cannot choose our neighbors" (UN General Assembly 2001).
> "Dialogue among civilizations is a process between and within civilizations, founded on inclusion, and a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meaning and core values and integrate multiple perspective through dialogue" (UN General Assembly 2001).
> "None civilization by itself can claim to represent all humanity and to assume full responsibility for it. Neither can one single civilization claim exclusive rights to provide a universally valid vision of how to be a good human beeing and how to live wisely in today's world" (V.Adamkus, president Lithuania) – cfr. "World heritage in your hands" UNESCO project – .

As a result of the above quoted declarations, a particular importance have been given to the question of language teaching and learning, as main channel to start dialogue among civilizations. In any case, there's a wholly new tendency on policies addressing languages teaching and learning, which is, shifting of "main international languages" to the promotion of richness of all national languages and dialects; and focusing on cultural aspects that encompass speaking, listening, reading and writing in a given foreign language, rather than learning language's structure and grammar (Council of Europe, 2003).

Foreign language teaching/learning is fortunately one of the most developed areas in Europe, that is currently articulating innovative projects towards multilingualism, with an intercultural approach, bringing to the center the question of intercultural communication.

3. History teaching and knowledge of neighboring countries.

The disintegration process after wars in Europe, and the further step into integration, has have as starting point a situation characterized by significant lack of interest in the neighboring countries, who may be different ethnic groups within a country or in neighboring countries. To tackle the root cases of this problem, knowledge and information is being spread, aiming to build "cultural awareness" not only about neighbor, but also, about the same country. It is to be clarified that a vision of "regional" groups, rather than "national" identities is preferred, avoiding artificial "labels" produced by "national" identity. Stereotyped images of neighboring countries and of ethnic minorities within a country, conveyed by history textbooks used in secondary schools need to be eliminated as they carry the virus of discrimination. It is necessary to foster better knowledge of the history of the multicultural characters of Europe if reconciliation among communities is to be achieved (Council of Europe, White Book on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008).

4. Protecting national minorities

Minority protection is integral part of human rights. Everyone is free to choose to be part or not to be part of the relevant minority: the rights of minorities can be exercised alone or in community with others. It underlines the importance of equal treatment and the right of preservation of the culture and identity, prohibiting deliberate assimilation, but allowing integration. It is placed a strong emphasis on tolerance, intercultural dialogue and protection against discrimination. It is em-

phasizes that members of minorities, like any other member of society, shall enjoy the universal rights to freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of religion. Their freedom of expression and information implies also a right to have their own media and their access to other media in the society where they live. Special attention is given to their right to use their own minority language, and their rights concerning personal names, signs and descriptions, places and street names. A core concern is the right to learn their own language and under certain conditions to have teaching of and instruction in the minority language. At least, of paramount importance is the right to effective participation by persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and public affairs, in particular those affecting them. There is a growing need to move away from the emphasis on catering for the needs of the constituent people to a more inclusive approach, focusing more on individual human rights.

B) Enhancing scientific, technical and human capacities for participation in the emerging knowledge society, that means

5. Promoting, in the field of sciences, dialogue-oriented initiatives focused on the link to sustainable development, and significant learning of the natural and social sciences as means for social transformation and increased networking and cooperation.

It is an uncontested fact to day that human society is dependent upon science and technology and its applications non only for the progress of humanity, but also for its survival in the future. In an increasingly democratic world, where the common man votes in or not of office those whose decisions can substantially alter the fate of millions, it is imperative to instill in every citizen a basic understanding of the importance of Science and Technology in all aspects of life. On another level, in past several decades, there has been an increasing trend among children and youths to turn away from S&T- in the developed countries because of the emergence of more attractive careers alternatives and in developing countries because of the lack of adequate infrastructures to provide corresponding outlets. There is thus a pressing need to make S&T attractive for children and youths as also for adults. Some projects could be referred to regional cooperation mechanisms (water and its management), to dialogue between traditional and local knowledge holders and scientists, to introduce new contents in sciences subject: climate change, natural disaster, waste management, energy resources, biodiversity resources, capacity building, enabling environments, health.

6. Rebuilding networks for scientific cooperation.

The integration of research networks and infrastructures of scientific cooperation needs to be improved in Europe. Brain drain in some European areas is affecting scientific productivity, having long terms effects on economic development. Rebuilding networks for scientific cooperation and enlarging them is being conceived as a large scale programme with five components: life sciences, environmental sciences, computer sciences and information technology, materials sciences and selected aspects of social sciences. This kind of focuses need to be strengthen from secondary education, promoting the interest on sciences, but also, giving clear opportunities of knowing science developments on the own reality, and sciences application for a cultural development.

C) Protecting cultural diversity and encouraging pluralism and dialogue among cultures and civilizations (ARTS)

7. Protection and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage.

The development of a culture of conservation and of a culture of respect for the multiethnic heritage of the area is a specific priority. This should address further development of cultural and ecological tourism, an important opportunity for economy growing, but with a vision of sustainability.

8. Artistic creation for promoting intercultural dialogue.

Transcending cultural and religious differences may well be the most difficult task on the road of European integration. An important contribution towards establishing intercultural dialogue among the communities of Europe countries can be made taking advantage of artistic education to foster a better knowledge of other cultures. Re-establishing links among the citizens can thus be encouraged through systematic international support for exhibition and festivals of contemporary art. Art education projects with an intercultural perspective can be a positive framework for mediation and for the prevention of conflict escalation that threatens to generate inter community-clashes. In other words art must be at the service of overcoming community barriers and identity-based issues; it can play an important integrating role as vector for intercultural communication. Contemporary art can effectively act as an informal pedagogical tool capable of opening minds to the richness of cultural diversity.

D) Promoting access to information and means of communication and awareness

9. Development of education trough information and communication technologies.

An increased and systematic use of modern information and communication technologies is advocated not only in the teaching/learning process in educational institutions, but also in educational planning and policy making.

10. Education in media and press freedom.

The Web 2.0 is facing all societies to an amazing change in the way media play a role within societies. Control of media is becoming less possible for the States, and the single users are empowered to communicate freely on the bases of the same web architecture. Nevertheless, the flows of words, messages and images conveyed by the traditional mass media, as well as the ICT have created an "information overload", which contributes to the lack of trustworthy of media. There is therefore a real need for developing critical media reading/watching skills and to raise awareness of the role of the media in a democratic society, a competence that is recognized as information literacy.

4. Teaching Methods: a new education to develop an intercultural competence[4]

To reach the most elevated levels of dynamic, metacognitive processes within intercultural competence, it seems necessary to introduce a new idea of teaching. It is not only a fact of treat some specific issues in class, or changing curriculum in a more "planetary" view: it's also a fact of changing radically didactics. In this sense, as many authors have stated, the ongoing processes of change within educational system, namely, a more flexible and participatory settings in classroom that allow the expression of the several intelligences and cultures present in class, have been claimed not only for intercultural education, but also, for the acquisition of a more effective, inclusive education (Cohen, E., 1997).

According to Italian background, which is confirmed by international trends in research, in order to achieve an intercultural approach to teaching, the teacher needs to focus on the following aspect of didactics (Minello, 2008):

11. Planification (The Learning Unit or educational project with characteristics that promote multiple intelligences)
12. Methodology (the method teaches more than the content: intercultural education introduces methods of social mediation)
13. Evaluation (the intercultural education works on the concept of formative evaluation as eco-social co-evaluation)

Nowadays **teacher-conveyed didactics** models are still too utilized. Even though they played an important role in all those experimentations that produced new approaches of knowledge transmission, they are not anymore suitable for the new requirements of identity formation within the growing context of diversity That is because

5. They favour centrality of teaching, instead of that of learning;
6. They favour fragile and easily standardizable identity-making representation, too rigid to support the fluid relations undertaken in the postmodern context.

It is in this very environment that sharing, negotiation and building of new meanings can all produce learning, considering culture, a forum (Bruner, 1996), continuously changing in order to give place to personal narratives of the world,

According to **small worlds theory** (Granovetter, 1973, then developed by Watt and Strogatz, 1998), that was initially applied to social contexts – after extended to different conceptual fields, **weak links are more efficient in producing connections and in reaching with celerity some previously unknown junctions. Instead, strong links such as hierarchy bonds miss this aims.**

A new conception of education and training is needed in the fluid context of post-modernity: with the use of methods that are not anymore focused on competitive growth of the individual, but on complex, integrated functions. Those functions would be able to stimulate and ease the improvement of all those cognitive and metacognitive abilities that are useful to optimise a wide range of

4 Based on Rita Minello's lecture, PERMIT First Residential Seminars, Istanbul , 11 February 2009.

processes: processes of thought and of knowledge building/management and of of identity and its social representations.

Addressing New Teaching Methodologies: New approaches to curriculum, instructional design, textbook management and assessment [5]

Intercultural education seems to play an important role within this new process of education, considering the way in which it interrogates practices, pushing to criticize traditions and raise awareness about inequalities educational practices and the system generate every day.

So forth, active learning processes, that allow participation and meaning making in class -with equal representation of diversities- are the kernel of educational shifting.

Let's consider the following table, that, in the view of UNESCO (2004) summarizes the axes of educational shifting: as we can see, it gives elements that are transversal to intercultural education, if we take into account the elements defining it.

The necessary reflection here is that, if intercultural education was a theme or a concern from 90's to recent years, nowadays it is becoming a part of educational shifting, because diversity is no more an unusual situation, but rather the rule of social postmodern condition.

5 Chapter based on Margiotta's model "Apprendimento per Soglie di Padronanza" – Learning by Thresholds of Mastery.

FROM	TO
Teaching and teacher-centered Curriculum & textbooks designed to reflet roles of the terache as "source of information" and"provider" of knowledge	Learning and learner centered (more attention to learning process) - to facilitate active learning - to develop inquiry skills - to nurture creativity - to facilitate learning to learn
Rigid discipline-based subjects	Interdisciplinarity and integration of subjects into curricular "package" in cohesive ways
College-bound cognitive learning	Multidimensional learning for higher learning, for the world of the work and for responsible citizenship
Examination-oriented: teaching to test	Outcomes oriented: achieving learning goals
School education claimed "value free", without course offering in moral/civic education	Teaching of shared human values made a learning area and values/ethic education to be integrated into curriculum at all levels
Totally academic curriculum	Diversification of educational content
Terminal learning as once for life chance before employment	Integral part of a lifelong learning continuum
Largely national and local concern: education as a primary vehicle for transmitting and preserving cultural norms	Increasing international concern due to globalization (demand for new learning opportunities expanding across communities in multicultural societies)
Highly centralized curriculum process and management	Decentralization, with flexibility for local/regional inputs and adaptation of national core curriculum : about 20%
Overloaded curriculum	Reducing curriculum load by better defining basic subject content and integrating related subject areas
IT education offered only as a subject	ICT integrated into content & process: ICT as a subject ICT as a tool ICT as an educational resource ICT as lever dor educational change
Textbooks being the only dominant curricular materials	Textbooks as part of multimedia learning materials or non standardized textbooks
Curriculum assessment to evaluate learning achievements	Assessment changed accordingly in qualitative and quantitative align with curricular change "to measure non only the measurable but the relevant" Comprehensive assessment of performance of teacher/school and education system
	UNESCO, 2004

The above depicted scenery, aims to generate dialogue spaces through teaching and learning: **an enlarged cultural environment to learn,** which superates the intercultural vision of education in the sense of separated diverse entities interacting, favouring a vision of diversities creating new cultures of learning. As part of research on professional identity development across frontiers I have introduced this concept in other works (Raffaghelli, 2008; 2009), but, within the context of PERMIT project, the concept was further explored and used with students in class.

Taking into account this concept, there are specific areas of impact that are to be achieved, through a complex engine of developing, training and experimentation: (a) Use of knowledge as a base for a process of deconstruction of symbols, representations and prejudices enclosed within the idea the teacher select and introduce to the class; (b) The dialogue, as process of participation and social construction of new learning cultures, as activity of meaning making; c) the awareness of diverse positions within these symbolic constructions, against social and cultural exclusion; d) the impact on identities. Therefore, symbols and metaphors introduced by new knowledge within symbolic universe of learners stimulate and support processes of expansion of cultural context of reference, creating the bases of sensibility to future diversity and tolerance.

According to cognitive approach metaphors stimulate "parallel mapping" among emotional and cognitive structures. But the use of metaphor are in great degree linked to the cultural context where learners live. Therefore, a guided educational process should focus this spontaneous cognitive process, leading to new cultural *contextualization:* we would say that learning resources and activities that allow participatory deconstruction of cultural icons and beliefs, introducing new images, representations and practices will support metaphors of new "possible worlds"[6]. Moreover, the process of negotiating a new context through teachers and learners' personal positioning (through expert knowledge, specific productions, narratives), is what makes visible the *enlargement of cultural context*.

This new context can be considered inclusive, since it allows participation not only from the point of view of activity (as is supposed to be in socio-constructivist approach); but mainly from the point of view acceptation of "diverse" cultural representations of the world (as symbols, images, practices) into a new synthesis.

The several inputs introduced by the teacher in class (from the particular disciplinary perspective) can generate, several ways of access to dominant and "other" cultural imaginaries: in fact, as specific, scientific "narrative", they introduce many cultural symbols through the metaphors that key concepts enact. When deconstructed through discussions and activities in class, they stimulate that essential human activity that J. Bruner called the "research of meaning", a psychological activity that help the human being to find reasons to live, to go through conflict and to solve the cognitive and emotional tensions of problems of every kind.

Knowledge should, in this perspective, take the learner from a self/ethno-centered vision of the world, to a social/ethnorelative ones, which implies tolerance, ability of understanding diversity, and curiousity about it. Moreover, it should make possible to cultivate the necessary skills that put the individual in the positive condition of negotiating hes/hir own interests towards common, participatory

6 According to Bruner's pedagogical perspective, founded on Rorty's philosophical perspective of neopragmatism

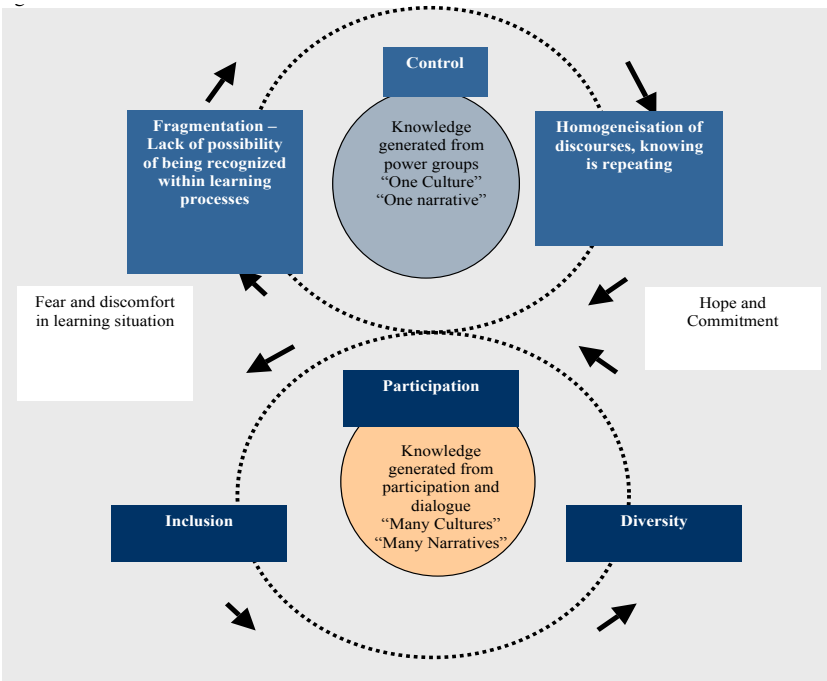
approach of human activity ——being in any case aware of the own unique identity.

Therefore, multiethnic learning environments could stimulate and promote the development of relational and communicative competences and of skills going from the simple acknowledgement that social and cultural differences exist to a much greater ability to interact with people coming from other countries.

As final part of this process, self-reflection upon and self-assessment of cultural experience can prove to be much more constructive from the educational point of view, owing to the fact that self-reflection and the acquisition of primary cultural experience allows for the authenticity of the cognitions acquired and the possibility to exert an active influence on the process of the formation of the student's personality. Self-reflection should take learners, together with teachers' to evaluate the impact of learning experience in the own level of intercultural sensibility.

In line with this, many approaches are privileging the use of tools that build on personal reflections about intercultural learning. One of the most relevant of them is the new educational instrument called the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (AIE), which a multidisciplinary team of researchers has recently developed for the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. It has been designed to facilitate and support the development of the intercultural competences which are necessary for engaging in effective intercultural dialogue.

This appears to be the base of civic participation and social inclusion, as desired educational impact of and intercultural education. We may represent this assumption with figure:



Adapted from R. Carneiro: *The Big Picture, Understanding Learning and Metalearning changes,* European Journal of Education, Vol 42, No. 2, 2007)

Worth to rembember, among the prioritary objectives of such an approach, there is the interest of create social cohesion and a culture of peace and openness.

5. Access to knowledge within the enlarged cultural context: the role of the Web

In this framework, knowledge introduced through teaching in formal contexts, could represent the breeding ground where differences and similarities can be meaningfully reconciled, thus improving and enriching dialogue within the social fabric; and also facilitating the education of individuals that through critical thinking and cultural awareness become respectful of diversity. The challenge this kind of education poses is the opportunity of vast *access* to knowledge, and their *resignification* through teachers and kids shared activities, born from protagonists of science and arts (their personal stories of discovering, making science/art, defending their positions in front of a skpetical society), situations, and values promoted by subjects' knowledge. The point here seems to be: how to adopt proper channels of access to such a complex knowledge, going beyond the stratified representation offered by textbooks and other official fonts?

The impressive development of new technologies, have generated a great opportunity to have access to knowledge. In fact the, Web have grown up in a way that have completely reshaped the way people retrieve information for everyday life, having immediate access to news, articles, books, social networks, expert communities of practice, online learning; from the other hand, smaller and cheaper personal PC (like *netbooks*) and particularly mobile devices, allow people to be connected to knowledge *always* and *everywhere*. This instant access to knowledge have generated unique opportunities of learning; in fact, this type of informal, spontaneous learning have been called *ubiquitous learning*.

There's still another important fact we have to keep in mind when considering technologies and society: from the first Internet, featured as static interface where only few had access, development of programmes that run entire applications online have produced a new Web, the so called "Web 2.0"[7]. Its characteristics are dynamism, interactivity, and hence the possibility offered to users of owning the data and exercise control over that data. This Web is, in a certain extent, allowing an "Architecture of participation" that encourages users to add value to the application as they content developers (O' Reilly, 2005)[8]. This have led to a societal shifting, since people has the opportunity of self-expression participating in what have been called the: a participatory web where users a new territory on the net, created by people that stand for a new citizenship "without frontiers". Nowadays,

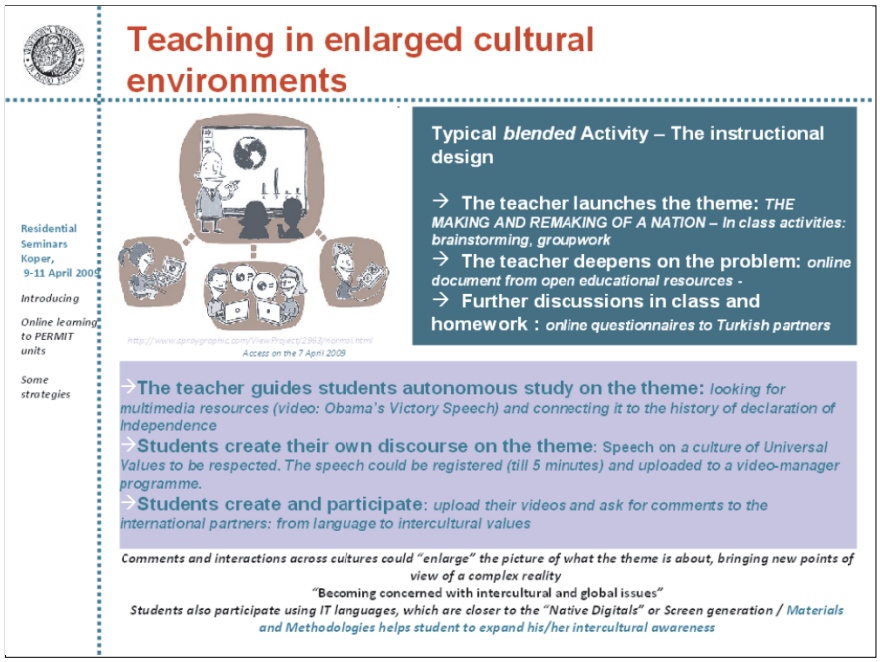
7 The term "Web 2.0" was coined in 1999 by Darcy DiNucci. In her article, "Fragmented Future," DiNucci writes: "*The Web we know now, which loads into a browser window in essentially static screenfulls, is only an embryo of the Web to come. The first glimmerings of Web 2.0 are beginning to appear, and we are just starting to see how that embryo might develop. The Web will be understood not as screenfulls of text and graphics but as a transport mechanism, the ether through which interactivity happens. It will [...] appear on your computer screen, [...] on your TV set [...] your car dashboard [...] your cell phone [...] hand-held game machines [...] maybe even your microwave oven*" DiNucci, D. (1999). "*Fragmented Future*". Print 53 (4): 32.
http://www.cdinucci.com/Darcy2/articles/Print/Printarticle7.html.

8 Tim O'Reilly (2005-09-30). "What Is Web 2.0". O'Reilly Network. http://www.oreillynet.com/-pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html. Retrieved 2010-02-10

there's one generation that was born and is growing up within this new territories: kids that are in contact with *screens* from the very early years, hence called the *Screengeneration* (Rushkoff, 2006). Their cognitive and social skills are mediated by virtual realities in a way that is inconceivable for adults. In fact, deepening on this hypothesis, Mark Prensky launched in 2001 the metaphor of "*Digital Natives",* in opposition to the "Digital Immigrants", that are the generations grown up in a world without Web and mobile phones.

Nevertheless, we should take into account a critical position to this perspective, being the Web a territory of human social practices, it can be concluded that it is also place of cultural and political engagement, with dominant discourses having it effects on participants, and creating zones of exclusion. As emergin in the intensive research of Edmunson about cultures in eLearning processes, much of conclusions in this field have been conducted by Westerners, and critic such as Fougere and Moulettes (2007) and Kim (2007) have pointed to the ethnocentricism implied in this. In fact, the societies showing ICT-intensive cultural paradigm, whose ideologies have been framed by the development of globalized eLearning, are mostly Anglo/North American/Australasian English speaking societies. In increasing manner, several studies demonstrates how societies other than anglophone are participating to the Web, generating new spaces where cultural engagement can be delineated by specific linguistic and symbolic frames, bringing culture into virtual spaces (Rutheford and Kerr, 2007; Gunawardena et. Al, 2009; Raffaghelli, 2010).

Founding on this ideas, we should now move on this hypothesis: **the potential of discipline's knowledge deconstruction could be better enhanced through the use of ICT.** Not only can new technologies provide an unique opportunity of access to knowledge of every kind; they can also provide a privileged mean to interact with a same concept/information in several languages (including multimedia, in a perspective of multimodal communication) and contexts, promoting the exploration of new representations of a same idea. Moreover, technologies allow several creative ways of participating in the process of meaning making – this is possible through the manipulation of concepts and objects linked to them in the virtual space. Technologies in fact facilitates simulation of real complex situations, from social games and networks that bring easily otherness into the local class; to experiments with use of hypermedia and virtual artifacts. Let's represent this idea through a simple image:



Achieving an intercultural competence

The intercultural education model, as it have been depicted before, should take to learning processes and learning outcomes, as *competence,* in the sense of ways of knowing, doing and being about *otherness*. In fact, the approach of *culture as construction* encompasses the idea of *developing* specific skills that lead to being able to interact with *otherness* and also build the own identity in the challenging scenery of globalized world. Nevertheless, many models of "intercultural competence", show principles that conduct to rather "essentialist" vision of culture, in the sense of interacting with rigid achieved cultural backgrounds, instead of being capable of recognize difference as element of opportunity to the own identity development.

In fact, there are a few frameworks for culture-centred learning to be considered as basic: Egan (1979) for general education development, Bennett (1993) for the development of intercultural sensitivity, Byram and Morgan (1994) and Kramsch (1993) for the inclusion of culture in the language classroom. The first two are based on the precepts of continuity, progression, and expansion of competence; they are dynamic and interact with the maturation levels of learners.

Moving on first approaches to intercultural competence development, we should consider the Bennet's model about *intercultural sensitivity* (M. Bennet & J. Bennet, 1993, 2004).

This framework, developed within the field of adult learning (intercultural training of US army forces) describes the different ways in which people can react to cultural differences and the degree to which they have adapted to them. It us-

es six stages to scale the level of cultural adaptation, where it should be the goal to reach the highest stage. The first three stages are ethnocentric as one sees his own culture as central to reality. Moving up the scale the individual develops a more and more ethnorelative point of view, meaning that you experience your own culture as in the context to other cultures. At the next stage these ethnocentric views are replaced by ethnorelative views.

The ethnocentric stages of the Bennett scale are:

- Denial: Denial one is simply not able to understand cultural differences. Indicators are benign stereotyping and superficial statements of tolerance. This stage is sometimes accompanied by attribution of deficiency in intelligence or personality to culturally deviant behavior.
- Defense: One notices cultural differences, but sees these differences as negative since the evaluation process is done by comparison with the own, perceived as the right, culture. The larger the difference the worse the other culture and the better ones own culture.
- Minimization: The stage where superficial cultural differences are recognized and accepted is called Minimization. Minimization because differences are minimized by focusing on similarities between ones own and the other culture due to an ethnocentric point of view.

The ethnorelative stages are:

- Acceptance: Acceptance is achieved when cultural differences are not only recognized but also accepted as an alternative solution of how to organize human existence.
- Adaptation: The development of communication skills that enable intercultural communication in order to understand and be understood across cultural boundaries qualifies for the adaptation stage called Adaptation.
- Integration: Integration, is reached when one managed the internalization of bi – or multicultural frames of reference. The one integrated in another culture is seeing one's self as in process.

The model has been implemented in numerous contexts, mainly from a psycho-social and also intercultural communication studies, since it allow a developmental vision of intercultural sensibility as necessary dimension of leaving in multicultural environments. One of the most structured contribution have been the scale of intercultural sensibility, the intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) , used as tool to understand levels of development of this psycho-social dimension. IDI version 3 is based on Dr. Hammer's Intercultural Development Continuum, which is an advanced adaptation of Dr. Milton Bennett's earlier Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. It **measures how a person or a group of people tend to think and feel about cultural difference stemming from any aspect of diversity, human identity, and cultural difference. IDI assesses the core mindset regarding diversity and cultural difference. The scale has been introduced as a tool to recognize the basis for developing "*competence leading, working in, and succeeding in an increasingly-diverse domestic and global workplace and marketplace*"**.

In Italy, the inventory has been adapted and used with italian population in cross-cultural studies by Ida Castiglioni (2005), as tool to analize intercultural communication in managerial studies. Nevertheless, in Europe, the importance of the Council of Europe reflections and research have focused on the necessity of respect diversity and the several cultural identities living together in the enlarged context of Europe, bringing civic and social concerns to the debate, and going beyond the organizational development concerns that are present in Bennet's model.

Michael Byram represent one of the most important lines of research on analysis and education for competences necessary for intercultural dialogue; for this researcher, intercultural competence is not automatically acquired, needing to be learned, practiced and maintained throughout life.

Basing on a general definition of competence as "Knowing, knowing to do, and knowing to be" (OCSE, 1996), this author, which worked in the field of languages learning and intercultural communication, developed the following framework:

- Knowing to learn, or Understanding otherness; using and creating opportunities for observation, analysis and interpretation.
- Knowing to know or achieving cultural knowledge, including sociolinguistic competence; awareness of non-explicit reference points such as values, beliefs, meanings.
- Knowing to be, or Understanding how an identity and a culture are socially constructed; setting aside ethnocentric attitudes and perceptions; openness and interest towards others; intercultural mediation.
- Knowing to do or the Integration of the three into foreign/L2 languages and interactions.

In Byram's research, the term 'interculturality' is used to refer to the capacity to experience cultural otherness and to use this experience to reflect on matters which are normally taken for granted within one's own culture and environment. Interculturality therefore involves being open to, interested in, curious about and empathetic towards people from other cultures. However, in addition, interculturality involves using this heightened awareness of otherness to evaluate one's own everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding.

In Byram's and successive works taking into account his perspective (Alred., Byram & Fleming, 2003; Alred., Byram & Fleming, 2006), hence, the term 'interculturality' is to be refered to:

- having a tolerant and respectful attitude towards individuals and groups from other cultural backgrounds
- being open to, interested in, curious about and empathetic towards people from other cultures
- being willing to use the awareness of cultural otherness to evaluate one's own cultural perspectives and everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding

Based on this understanding of interculturality, the analysis subdivides intercultural competences into six broad categories (which are derived from the work of Byram, 1997):

- **Attitudes:**
  - Respect for otherness: a willingness to suspend one's own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones, and a willingness to accept that people from other cultures have different sets of values, beliefs and behaviours
  - Empathy: understanding other people's perspectives, and being able to project oneself imaginatively into the beliefs, values, thoughts and feelings of people from other cultures
  - Acknowledgement of identities: ability to acknowledge the identities which cultural others ascribe to themselves, and to acknowledge the meanings which they themselves associate with those identities. This is not always easy because there is a tendency to assimilate other people's identities to the ones which we know from our own cultural perspective
  - Tolerance of ambiguity: recognising that there can be multiple perspectives on, and interpretations of, any given situation —— multiperspectivity, that is, the ability and willingness to take others' perspectives on events, practices, products and documents into account, in addition to our own.
- **Knowledge**
  - **Specific knowledge:** Specific knowledge about one's own culture and about its practices and products is acquired primarily through socialisation within the family and the school. However, in order to be able to understand the perspective of a person from another culture, one also needs to have some ***specific knowledge*** about the culture of that other person and about its practices and products.
  - General knowledge: One needs general knowledge about interaction and communication processes and of how these processes are shaped by cultural factors.
- **Skills of discovery and interaction.** Novelty is often encountered in intercultural dialogue, and nobody can anticipate all of their knowledge needs in advance. For this reason, it is important to be able to find out new knowledge and integrate it with what is already known. In particular, we need to know how to ask people from other cultures about their beliefs, values and behaviours, and how to seek out further information about their cultures. So intercultural dialogue requires *skills of discovery and interaction*, and these sometimes have to be deployed under the constraints of real-time communication with the cultural other.
  - Because new cultural knowledge may be acquired during the course of interaction, interculturality also requires ***behavioural flexibility***, that is, the ability to adjust and augment one's existing capacities and to adapt one's behaviour to new situations.
  - Problems in intercultural communication can often occur because the communication partners follow different linguistic conventions. This is because people from different cultures: a) associate different meanings with specific words; b) express their intentions in different linguistic forms ; c) follow different cultural conventions of how a conversation should take place with regard to its content or its structure; d) attribute different meanings to gestures, mime, volume, pauses, etc.
  - These problems are exacerbated by the use of foreign languages, when people are often not able to formulate or interpret intentions appropriately in given contexts. Successful intercultural dialogue therefore also entails ***communicative awareness***. Communicative awareness is the ability to

recognise different linguistic conventions, different verbal and non-verbal communication conventions and their effects on discourse processes, and to negotiate rules appropriate for intercultural communication.

- **Skills of interpreting and relating.** A further important aspect of interculturality is the ability to interpret the perspectives, practices and products of another culture.
  - These ***skills of interpreting*** require specific knowledge of the other culture, as well as empathy, multiperspectivity and more general knowledge of cultural practices, products and identities.
  - Interpretation also requires ***skills of relating***, that is, the ability to compare the perspectives, practices and products of the other culture with corresponding things in one's own culture, and ***seeing the similarities and differences*** between them.
- **Critical cultural awareness.** This is the ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products both in one's own culture and in other cultures. It involves:
  - becoming aware of one's own assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices
  - identifying the values which are expressed through the perspectives, practices and products both of one's own culture and other cultures
  - making an evaluative analysis of those perspectives, practices and products, using an explicit set of criteria in order to do so
  - working on own everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding
- **Action orientation.** The final dimension of intercultural competence identified in our analysis is *action orientation*. The actions which an intercultural individual can take can be of many forms, for example:
  - grasping and taking seriously the opinions and arguments of others, according personal recognition to people of other opinions, putting oneself in the situation of others
  - accepting variety, divergence and difference, recognising conflicts, finding harmony where possible
  - regulating issues in a socially acceptable fashion, finding compromises, seeking consensus, accepting majority decisions
  - weighing rights and responsibilities, emphasising group responsibilities, developing fair norms and common interests and needs

According to this model of intercultural competence, motivation, a positive attitude, purposefulness and commitment are said to be key factors in the success of intercultural contact and intercultural dialogue. The development of intercultural awareness through educational methods – needs therefore to concern itself with knowledge, feelings, attitudes and behaviors. An intercultural teaching should promote activities and learning environments that produce varied, memorable and significant insights about own cultural identity and backgrounds in contrast with others' own, engaging then students on an affective and experiential level. Activities that should be designed to enable students to reflect upon themselves as individuals and as members of the social groups to which they belong, by exploring their behavior within their micro-cultures in their home country, and enable them to find strategies to cope independently with life in contact with other cultures, or in a foreign environment.

Even if Byram's framework is one of the most extensive and at the same time deepest approach to analyze intercultural competence, since it has been created in the field of language learning, it presupposes the existence of explicit diversities, and the possibility to understand them through the process of exposition to cultural difference, namely, enclosed in other languages. It does not take into account the problem of cultural dominance and the lack of expression of minorities, since it consider that an intercultural communication have place through equal positioning of individuals or groups engaged in. Byram's model has led to interesting developments but also sometimes misleading definitions of intercultural relations, focusing too much on an essentialist approach of culture where this last is considered a close entity that the individual is eager to preserve.

For example, working on Byram's proposal, Čok (1999) has defined three areas of intercultural competence in language learning. In this perspective, the definition of *national awareness,* is a mental representation, covering the emotional, cognitive and dynamic areas.

The cognitive area refers to individual's thoughts, concepts, judgement and assessment activities, the emotional to the emotions and values that the individual assigns to his/her nation and national attributes, and the dynamic area to his/her aspirations to actively participate in the dynamics of happenings related to nationality.

Nevertheless ok highlights that it is difficult to determine easily understood and transparent criteria for considering the phenomenon. On the basis of results of pilot introduction of the language portfolio in Slovenia (Čok, 1999) the group self-reflection and self-assessment as a way to understand the level of development of intercultural competence. According to this research, by using the following descriptors, the portfolio user will evaluate his/her linguistic experience at the following levels: attitude to intercultural diversity; discovery of intercultural diversity and modulation of inputs; transfer of intercultural awareness to life.

- Level 1: Attitude, disposition to cultural diversity
  - Cognitive attitude/abilities (Intra-cultural awareness, intercultural readiness / comprehension of intercultural context)
  - Intra-cultural/cognitive level: Acquiring new knowledge of one's own culture. Acquiring new knowledge and awareness of the target culture and, consequently, encouraging the reflection about one's own culture.
  - Intercultural understanding of the reality: Knowledge of otherness, heuristic approaches to languages and cultures, awareness of the socio-cultural context.
- Level 2: Discovery of diversity and modulation of inputs. Emotional attitudes/awareness and behaviour. Cross-cultural/emotional (affective) level: intercultural knowledge, reflection on one's identity, communication between two cultures (source and target) and, consequently, earning respect and learning tolerance for the new cultural context, ability to challenge and question one's own conceptual models, tolerance for ambiguity.
- Level 3: Transfer of intercultural awareness to life. Dynamic intercultural communication and acting. Intercultural/dynamic level: Response to on one's own anthropological/cultural experiences, dynamics (action) in cross-cultural referencing, ability to modify one's own beliefs (intercultural flexibility), positive attitudes and standpoints related to target cultures.

The proposed methodology is supposed to enable the portfolio user to gain a deeper insight into his/her linguistic and cultural experience. By writing down and analysing his/her findings, the user will start to develop his/her intercultural sensibility and awareness, which is, needless to say, a life-long process.

The problem here seems to be the assumption of a cultural identity as something achieved and fixed, which can be developed considering certain levels of knowledge and skills as highest. This kind of approach, even when very useful in some teaching contexts, could neglect the importance of "learning cultures" as flexible, new cultural productions and behavioural patterns emerging from learning interactions. In Čok's words: *On the basis of mutual knowledge of one another, various ethnic communities can comprehend and accept cultural norms of other groups and establish unbiased interaction. The competence to identify oneself mentally with other cultures (empathic competence) is often considered as one of the most important intercultural competences*. (Čok, 2009)

Interacting with this model, CIRDFA research team proposed the dimension of metacognitions within the framework (Melchiori, Minello, Raffaghelli, 2009), to be implemented for PERMIT project, and emphasizing the idea of continuing development of cultural identity.

Metacognitions and metalearning, in the sense of awareness of the own cognitive and emotional processes here seems to play an important part as individual strategies that promote a kind of approach to intercultural contact where understanding and empathy have place.

The term "Metacognition" was introduced for the first time by Flavell (1970), being often simply defined as "thinking about thinking." In actuality, defining metacognition is not that simple. Although the term has been part of the vocabulary of educational psychologists for the last couple of decades, and the concept for as long as humans have been able to reflect on their cognitive experiences, there is much debate over exactly what metacognition is. One reason for this confusion is the fact that there are several terms currently used to describe the same basic phenomenon (e.g., self-regulation, executive control), or an aspect of that phenomenon (e.g., meta-memory), and these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature. While there are some distinctions between definitions (see Van Zile-Tamsen, 1994, 1996 for a full discussion), all emphasize the role of executive processes in the overseeing and regulation of cognitive processes. According to Flavell (1979, 1987), metacognition consists of both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences or regulation. Metacognitive knowledge refers to acquired knowledge about cognitive processes, knowledge that can be used to control cognitive processes. Flavell further divides metacognitive knowledge into three categories: knowledge of person variables, task variables and strategy variables.

The term hence refers clearly to an overcome model of cognitive science, that finds it background on Miller, Galanter and Pribram (1960). It supports, following Flavell's definition, the the conception of a mental representation and planning preceding learning actions, both declarative/semantic and procedural, and that there's the possibility to access to that "knowledge on knowledge". This capacity means, according to Brown,(1978) – a Flavell's collaborator – that if somebody is executing a task, in order to acquire or increase capacities and knowledge, it is nec-

essary to be able of 1) make a plan, anticipating the whole situation -with regard to the difficulties that the problem could generate, on the own cognitive categories- 2) to plan the own activities, 3) to verify and control results about the own process of learning, understanding or recall. As we can observe, these definitions have a clearly cognitivist imprinting, that can only be re-dimensioned through the pioneer works of Schoen (1987), and reflexivity on practices. In the recent years, attention has been paid to the learning process as construction of the self, across the life span (Demetrio, 2004), moving the focus from cognitive, rational intelligence to emotional intelligence, and the knowledge of the self. This means, instead of a fragmentary recognition of mental functions (as stated by cognitive approach), the generation of a whole identity representation, which in time lead to the awareness of competence (expert performer in specific contexts).

From another point of view, and considering the Activity Theory, (Leont'ev, 1978; Engestrom, 1987), we could say that metacognition occurs when the learner recognizes the tensions generated by the internal contradictions of an activity system. In Bateson terminology (1972), according to Engestrom's analysis of the same, integrating Activity model, "*Double Binds*" are faced through this passage of recognition of the own capacities and a profound reflection on the system of human Activity. This leads to an expansive transition through the necessary interactions among diverse activity systems, in an attempt ot those to define, enclose, a "Runaway Object". In this manner, our concern about metacognitive dimension of intercultural competence is justified in the sense that the same could have a consistent impact both in emotional, social, cognitive, and dynamic level, as a transversal element.

Therefore, the intercultural learning, towards the creation of new learning cultures, that preserve the previous representations, emerges from the process of understanding the own identity, from the necessity of the otherness to exist, and from the process of continuous creation and re-creation of meaning that the contact with diversity generates.

6. Teachers' Intercultural Education: key players of Educational Shift need strategic training

Teachers are not teaching to cultures, but to individuals, and that one "macro-culture" could encompass many "micro-cultures": in essence, cultural values and identity aren't something fix, once achieved never changed. Instead of that, a constructivist concept of culture see it as a changing entity, founded on the many narratives of individuals participating to social processes (Hutchinson, 2006). Knowledge is created in the crucible of culture, and is mediated by the nature of nature. In the teaching diversity, teachers need to understand the process by which cultural paradigms, juxtaposed to the process of knowledge construction may potentially create multiple realities for different students. When teaching diversity teachers need to be aware that they could be teaching also diverse students; therefore, teachers need the heightened awareness by which they can more effectively decipher student knowledge, classroom knowledge, institution knowledge, minorities knowledge; teaching is, therefore, building new cultural realities by negotiating cultural meanings that enter the classroom, to create a respectful and balanced learning environment

The teachers, as professionals of education, are at the center of this storm: they cannot remain out of these trends, since they are teaching for the knowledge society (Grant, C.A. & Wieczorek, K. , 2000) Teachers' efforts to address intercultural education and dialogue occur in this scenery of educational change, where internationalization in education systems —aimed to achieve international identities and global competitiveness— is to be contrasted with the necessity of facing the problem of migrations at the local level (Gundara, 2000), as is the case of European Union, one of the most developed projects of recognition of a transnational/regional cultural identity in the respect of local cultural traits. Teachers can no longer work from an ethnocentric vision of teaching (Gobbo, 2000): they need to become a professionals able to recognize new multicultural learning contexts, respecting diverse learning styles (Margiotta, 1999; Gobbo, op.cit, 2004), which is completely changing relationships with classroom, peers, institutions and community; also challenging the basis of conventional teacher status and function (Margiotta, 1999).

Teachers' Professionalism on the cutting edge

A complex picture of society and learning has been presented in the last paragraphs. A changing, multicultural, and hyperconnected society, where learning seems to occur not only in the classroom context, but in the many opened spaces of life-experience, and particularly, within, or maybe, in-between the net and its new culture, is presenting a clear challenge to teachers.

How could they participate and play their role of educators in such a complex picture of new learning contexts?

Certainly, this scenery is calling for a decentralized vision of discipline and practices, which is, an *intercultural* vision, not only about the several nationalities and multilinguistic classroom the teachers' have to face; but also, about extending the meaning of *intercultural*, opening it to new emerging languages and cultures created by the net, that could be considered another competing culture to the school and formal /national culture of education.

All these problems need an innovating approach that cannot be partial, or fragmentary; in fact, one of the main strategies identified and discussed in EU and in new entering countries (European Commission, 2007), has been the reinforcement of teachers' training, and research on teachers' training, through a vision of a *mobile profession*, among others.

Teachers' *professionalism* is the *core element of quality in education*; there's complete agreement at the international level that professionalism can be achieved through Higher education degree (the so called *universitisation* process in teachers' training – Zgaga, 2007 –); but there's a raising concern about **valorization of practices** and **professional identity of teachers**, considering them as **researchers** (Elliott, MacLure & Sarland, 1996; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Jansma et. Al., 1997) as experts whose potential could be developed through active participation to teachers' communities. Those communities in time, by exchanging good practices, could reflect on action (Elliot, 2006); as it has been emphasized (Midoro, 2005; Margiotta, 2007), these activities could lead to professional affiliation, motivation and thus, excellence

Teachers' education seems to need urgent interventions where processes of *giving sense* to the action of participation in international projects, implantation of teaching innovations, and mobility, could generate ***opportunities to reflect on ethnocentric teaching practices***, with impact on motivation, teaching methods, and then, to the perception of their own role as social actors.

Conclusions

If ever a more complex and nuanced understanding of culture were needed, that time is now. The posindustrial era has brought a global cross-mingling of people as never before in human history.

After the trauma of II World War, Europe is keen to educate its citizens in mutual tolerance; the Council of Europe is funding much educational research into interculturality.

As I attempted to show in this introducing article, the picture is bigger and more complex that one could imagine when approaching the field of intercultural education.

In fact, there is need of intercultural education, but in which extent the claim of "intercultural" is deeply woven in a Western tradition and representation of education?

Educational systems are making efforts to introduce intercultural perspective of curriculum and of teaching, but yet this is not enough to generate and intercultural competence; knowing, as it has generally been emphasizing, is just part of a competence, that requires to be completed with knowing to do and knowing to be.

This is the moment where teaching method play an important part, by enacting processes of participation and deconstruction of knowledge introduced through the curriculum; this should take people to learn in an enlarged cultural context.

In such an educational landscape, technologies play an importan role: intercultural education cannot do without the reflections emerging in this field, as I demonstrate in the dedicated paragraphs, and as it will be emphasized later (chapter 9, this book).

The last research field considered in this "big picture" of intercultural education is that of intercultural competence: the impact of teaching and learning innovations, it should take to the realisation of more commited and aware citizens that are capable of living and interact with diversity in creative manners. Nevertheless, as it has been pointed out, all approaches to "competence" in the field of intercultural research, seem to enclose difficulties in conceiving "culture" as something dynamic, contrasting more constructivist approaches. Indeed, the notion of intercultural "competence" that has emerged mainly through the field of research in languages teaching is a problematic one. Within applied linguistics and language learning and teaching research, intercultural communication has been not only an aspiration, but also an obstacle, to theoretical and pedagogical progress, because of a lack of problematization of the notion of culture itself. For instance, in research where a major component of culture has been ascribed to individuals psychobiographies, Sealey and Carter (2004) found that. "*Some of the key concepts used in mainstream studies of intercultural communication are vulnerable to criticism", in particular those that present culture as though it were an attribute of the individual, a property of – or possesion held by – people as a result of where they live, the religion they practice, the colour of their skin and so on*" (2004:153).

Mainly in the case of teaching L2, in the case of domestic-diversity, the concern about the necessity of new methods has grown up; in the last few years, the construct of culture has been reinterpreted in social terms, leading to a preoccupation with "intercultural", "cross-cultural", or "inter-discourse" communication, depending on school of thought (see Piller 2007). However, research into experiences of language learning carries many stories of full or partial failure, not in the use of the code (local language) but in the partners' understandings of each others' cultures, and about the success of interaction among the hosting culture and the foreigners' one. As we have seen, this problem has led to interrogate the nature of relations with diversity, not only in the case of domestic integration, but also, in the case of mobility as increasing phenomenon (the migration of "rich" in search of new learning experiences, in order to qualify the own learning *baggage*)

The understanding of the notion of cultural difference that underpins most current research arises from a view of culture as manifestation in individuals of all the values, beliefs and ways of thinking and doing things that come with the membership of particular national, tribal, ethnic, civic or religious communities. Culture, in this view, is a consequence of geographical, historical, climatic, religious, political, linguistic and other behaviour and attitude shaping influences that are assumed to act on everyone who shares the same physical and social environment. It implies that indiviuals are habituated, or have their minds "hard wired" through upbringing, schooling and the acquisition of language and social customs, and that they can be characterized by ways of behaving and interacting that are typical to people of that nationality or ethnic group. Much of the research into cultural issues in transnational contexts is framed by this kind of conceptualisation, often referring to the work of Hofstede and others who have developed categorizations of national cultural categories such as individualism (focus on self-interest) and collectivism (centred on the interests of family in the wider community); or high context (using the entire social context of an interaction: physical location, status of participants, body language, etc. to interpret its meaning) and low-context (focusing on the direct content of messages, seeking specific information and/or expecting particular responses).

This could be interpreted as an essentialist framework, in the sense that they describe individuals in terms of cultural attributes existing at the moment of initiating an interaction; and hence limiting the possibility of enact new forces in a learning context.

As I stated before, mostly in the research about eLearning process, the idea of new cultures on the net have been emphasized, since the first studies on "cybercultures" to the last exploration of learning design, learning impact and educational relations in transnational online learning courses (Macfadyen, 2004; Goodfellow & Lamy, 2009). This literature draw on contemporary cybercultures of the Internet as well as systems of cultural relations inherited from conventional educational or corporate settings. Whereas the phenomenon of community in online settings has been widely discussed in terms of its ability to generate human feelings and behaviours closely analogous to those experienced in physically located communities (see for example the work of Rheingold about virtual communities, 1993). But again, this put forward the problem of creating new "melting pots" where the risk of lost of diversities are to be considered. Furthermore, most of this studies have been developed working on higher education and adult learning contexts, contrasting deeply the studies on languages' learning, which have a more developed tradition on school contexts.

PERMIT experimentation have searched for answers in all these directions, without living controversies at the internal research group, mainly generated by the different disciplines collaborating in research and learning design. This is clearly showing how, from theory to fieldwork, much work is needed in developing intercultural learning experiences, and in reflecting not only at the level of learners (teachers and students) but also, at the level of involved research groups, and the disciplinary backgrounds that every researcher bring to the table at the moment of thinking innovation in intercultural education.

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