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Introduction

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. The planetary society needs to reconsider its values, images, symbols, generating from one hand the instruments of tollerance, mutual understanding and dialogue; and from the other, recognizing the common, grounded values of human kind. The main hypothesis, where mainly European Union is investing through its well known policies and programmes, is that education is the key to intervene in conflicting societies within this complex landscape. Too much effort is to be done in the attempt of promoting dialogue among civilizations , preventing people to perceive otherness as a menace; but, at the same time, a long way has already been done in the last sixty years of European reconciliation, and in front of the last thirty years of massive immigration, where intercultural education has played a crucial role.

Europe is now looking beyond, considering the integration of countries like Turkey, where interrogating the own cultural project and identities connected to religion, history, territory; new alleances, seems to be necessary; it could be affirmed that these new experiences of dialogue help Europe to explore an entirely new, integrated model of development, where social cohesion gives place to a more sustainable society.

Connected to these reflections, the present study introduces perspectives about education as instrument of dialogue: the project PERMIT (Promote Education and Reciprocal Understanding through Multicultural Integrated Teaching) tried to become a playground where to experience the above sketched principles. Bringing together people from several cultural background, from Slovenia, Turkey and Italy, was a challenge from the beginning, where it was hypothesized that researchers, teachers, and students, had low levels of knowledge about each other; and where building together new practices of teaching and learning, would be the key to achieve an intercultural competence required to be an active citizen in the planetary society (Byram, 2003)

We wish to underline that we consider culture as living entity, continuously evolving, 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). Our effort will be entirely devoted to show how values, opinions and attitudes (rep-

resentations of cultural identity) can be discovered and re-negotiated through new pedagogic practices (Minello, 2008; Raffaghelli, *in press*), even when, considering other famous approaches on cultures classification, they represent a *software of the mind*[1].

When discussing cultural experience, one should pay attention to the multiplicity of accepted values and functions that an individual or social group has acquired through time. Yet an individual, who would like to retain his/her accepted values, is far from being static when performing activities aimed at preserving his/her values. The dynamics of his/her memory use is complemented by his/her will with which s/he strives to transform the world. In the process, s/he makes use of mediational means of higher mental functions related to cultural behaviour and practices (perception and active use of intercultural language communication, formation of active and empathic relations and positions between participants in the communicative situation, use of safeguards and incentives during participation in communication, etc.) and develops the mediational means as means of communication and behaviour related to the formation of cultural memory (Cole, 1996, 113). Cultural memory is developed through the elaboration of more complex» tools of remembering «that help create a new, deeper cultural experience, which serves as a basis for the further development of relations between individuals and groups.

The study starts from some theoretical issues where intercultural approach to education is examined and discussed, towards rethinking curriculum in an intercultural perspective.

In line with this, Chapter 2 (Juliana Raffaghelli) introduces a frame of discussion about the topics treated in every contribution. It describes the several positions of research on intercultural education, as potential engine of social change aimed to introduce dialogue among civilizations, reduce conflict, and preventing the perception of otherness as a menace. The chapter takes the account of the

1 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 Out4look, 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 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.

latest developments on educational research as well as cultural studies, pointing the need to leave behind the idea of cultures classification for a new point of view, – the one is introduced in the PERMIT case –. It supports he position of culture as something dynamic, continuously evolving, and created on the bases of dialogue and interaction, building on 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, as the author of this chapter emphasizes, 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 renegotiated through new pedagogic practices (Minello, 2008). The idea is worked out through the discussion of evolution of intercultural education in several educational fields: curriculum research, teaching methods, the development of learning environments, the achievement of intercultural competence, and teachers' professionalism. Thus, the second chapter aim's is, while introducing these topics, to depict the foundations of research that impulsed PERMIT's project experimentation.

Deepening on this perspective, Rita Minello and Juliana Raffaghelli's third chapter has the objective of providing the reader with a framework for reflection on the prospects of intercultural education in Italy. To tackle this issue, the authors introduce the recent changes in educational policies and recomendations, based on information provided by National Ministry, but also in the growing number of best practices coming out the intrinsic sensitivity of teachers in Italy. From Minello and Raffaghelli point's of view, it seem that much of the directions of intercultural education in Italy are pushed by practitioners, and that a systematic approach is still an utopia. Even when the choices of institutes, have extolled the logic of "Autonomia" (Italian law that regulates the process of schooling system decentralization), and some regulations are present in the Italian field, much of practice is still a fact of willingness and interest. The authors claim for a more systematic approach to teachers' education with regard to intercultural education and cultural studies addressing educational practices and research, as the key element for a strategic approach to the topic.

The contribute of the first guest researcher, Francesca Lazzari, makes light on the problem of second generation of immigrants in the Italian context. She sheds light about the problem of second generations of immigrants, among which many of the students involved in the PERMIT experience could be placed. Therefore, her well grounded research is of important value to understand the problem of growing up "hybrid", within a cultural context that the student recognizes as familiar, but having yet the need to make it dialogue with family life's values and beliefs. Furthermore, Lazzari's contribute could be contextualised within the debate and the heuristic paths that have and continue to deal with the topic of differences, developing a cultural perspective to be identified within the link of education/ formative intercultural approach. As she points put, by means of an intercultural approach in education, the practice of mediation-negotiation integrates the perspective of the differences with the capacity of empowerment expressed by the ethic of responsibility. Her attempt is thus, to bring the perspective of the second generations within pedagogical reflexivity/reflection on intercultural issues; to this regard, the cultural scenario of reference for identity and acculturation processes of second generation of teenager immigrants, integrat-

ed in the italian school and social context, is outlined. Her approach reinforces, that way, the final conclusions of PERMIT case, making the point of generalizations and use in further research about intercultural education of results hereby achieved. As she emphasizes, *the method by which the school system will be able to include second generations will be crucial for fulfilling the conditions of conscious, transformative, and creative access to knowledge in contemporary pluricultural societies*.

The second guest researcher, Cristina Richieri, brings a complementary vision of interculturalism through her article on teachers' education. As she points out, they need to be prepared to provide the young generations with the right instruments to interact with diversity, understand the motivations behind differences in behaviour, thoughts and feelings and learn to govern the emotional dimensions of fear and anxiety towards otherness. Thus, she focus the role of reciprocity, as strategy to build the necessary competences to establish a fruitful relationship with otherness, especially when the other is from a different cultural background and when intercultural dialogue seems to be difficult. Richieri explores the concept of reciprocity, from the general background to the analysis of impact of training in intercultural groups of teachers. She therefore introduces the analysis of some data collected after an international seminar, promoted by the Council of Europe (Pestalozzi Programme), where she search for empirical evidence to ground the concept of recipropcity as key element of teachers' intercultural education. Her perspective is of evident value to the analysis of PERMIT case, since the participant group within her study and the training strategies (international teachers' community) could be considered convergent with that of PERMIT project, providing the approach with further evidence. In fact, Richieri's conclusions are in line with the whole educational dispositive promoted by PERMIT, further discussed by Minello and Raffaghelli. As she proposes, teachers' mutual learning in informal and non-formal contexts across frontiers, together with their consequent intercultural sensitivity are to be considered a strategic way for teachers' education, because, as it emerges from Richieri's empirical research, it implies greater attention to relationship and strongly asserts the power of connectiveness in terms of mutual learning mover. From this viewpoint, teachers' mutual learning across frontiers takes charge of social responsibilities because it implies the search for the relationship with otherness and promotes reciprocity in individuals' behaviour.

Closing the Theoretical issues, the article of Umberto Margiotta draft the conceptualisation of a curriculum that can tackle with the formation of an intercultural competence. As he emphasizes, in both education in general and learning processes in particular, there is an increasing recognition of the need to develop students' intercultural competence, a fact that poses a range of theoretical and practical challenges. The need of developing an intercultural curriculum, considering and discussing steps and dimensions of curriculum, is strategically explored from the introduction of an example of description of languages learning within an intercultural orientation. Margiotta draws on this example to discussed the construct of intercultural curriculum, towards a conceptualisation. In order to do this, he uses four constructs, that he explain as four interrelated processes **Conceptualising** (What to assess); **Eliciting** (How to elicit); **Judging** (How to judge) and **Validating** (How to justify).

The second part focuses the PERMIT project as case study, putting together

researchers and teachers' reflections about innovation in terms of designing, training, collaborating and working in class from an intercultural perspective.

To this regard, Roberto Melchiori, Rita Minello and Juliana Raffaghelli, introduce the basis of the methodological approach to understand the case study PERMIT. This introduction puts the basis for a methodological discussion about research field and further conceptualization of the implementation of international educational cooperation aimed to delicate activities as intercultural education. As the authors point out, *the definition of what is a good research methodology varies according to initial assumptions, theories, and philosophical approaches shared by the researchers and based on the intended uses of the results of a research*. Therefore, in the Permit project the methodological approach has involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, towards a mixed methods approach, under the assumption of a constructionist epistemology of research. More than that, studies using mixed-method have shown that integration of these traditions within the same study can be seen as complementary to each other.

The following chapter (Raffaghelli), explores the problem of research on teachers' professionalism and in-service training as frame of analysis of the strategy adopted within the PERMIT project of analyzing teachers' beliefs on intercultural teaching and learning. The selection of this strategy is in fact due to the evolution from objectivist models (through the observation of teachers at work) to consider their cognitive and metacognitive operation when planning their own work, to a complete introduction of their subjectivity as individuals deeply involved in creating their professional identity. In fact, the new perspectives of research on teachers' professionalism involve the exploration of experiences, beliefs, images and social representations of teaching and learning, connected to specific cultural contexts. Exploring teachers' beliefs within the context of PERMIT experience was extremely relevant in order to understand the directions of future in-service training. But also, it was an important source of information and reflection for teachers within the training approach (as further analyzed by Raffaghelli and Minello). This was also coherent with the methodological research assumptions, of building jointly with stakeholders (teachers and students involved within PERMIT activities) the several concepts guiding activity.

Subsequently, Raffaghelli and Minello present the teachers' training approach. The authors aim to introduce the envisioned strategy lying behind the teachers' training programme implemented within PERMIT project. The project considered, from the beginning, the teachers' education as a crucial component of an educational dispositive (in the sense of U. Margiotta's conception of dispositive as social mechanisms enacting a human group doing, thinking, acting) aimed to generate innovation regarding the project's topic (intercultural education for civil society dialogue). Intercultural competences to manage complex learning processes in the complex scenario of three diverse realities dialoguing into PERMIT project was to be a concrete goal of training. But at the same time, such a dispositive for teachers' education was envisaged to support reflection about the process of formation of teachers' professional identity for the new hybrid and fluid learning space; As the authors points out, the concept of formal training with too structured activities needed to be revisited on the light of a new strategy of in service training. In fact, the strategy focused on supporting contact with peers in the local reality and across frontiers; the use of online learning

tools; coaching to further experimentation in class and the creative process of learning design undertaken by teachers in sistematizing the many resources and ideas coming out from their work in class ("Pedagogy of learning unit"). In the end, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning would lead to the accreditation of learning by the University Ca' Foscari of Venice.

Coherently with this position, the authors organize and discuss, towards conceptualisation, the several phases of training activities under the light of Activity Theory and Learning by Expansion, that highlights the authors conception of training (and experimenting in class) as a process of progressive construction and reflection.

Closing the empirical part, Raffaghelli depicts some of the scenarios of practice, from teachers' learning to implementation of PERMIT strategies in class, with her article on intercultural learning on the Web. She introduces the process of creation of an informal learning-community emerging from PERMIT international cooperation, which main goal was to promote teachers professionalism and collaboration across frontiers with impact on intercultural dialogue. To do this, the author explain the creation, strategies and use of a virtual working/learning space (VWLS). But, in an attempt to go beyond the surface of creation of the learning environments for intercultural education, she work out the idea (bringing concrete examples as qualitative evidece) of the VWLS supporting space for intercultural dialogue, that generates both motivation to participate and share the own cultural identity, and opportunities to working and learning *together*. As Raffaghelli concludes, the VWLS becomes *meaningful*, diverse, but also comprehensive of the own original cultural context, because built semantically by themselves. This sense making process could impact on a new dimension of intercultural learning in a new place *without frontiers,* that is represented by "virtual" reality. The conceptualization of such a space takes the author to think on an **enlarged cultural context,** as a context of learning that is built, emphasizing the concept of *thirdness* resulting from dialogic perspective of interactions.

In fact, we could conclude that the whole work attempts to think the process of formation of intercultural identities in the context of new, enlarged cultural relationship, and the role of secondary education.

We consider here identities in terms of experience of relationships, and particularly, as experience of relationships among educators and learners and among peers within the educational process. In this way, we can take up again the question of dynamism versus closure of cultural identities. It's our attempt to show how the formation of an intercultural competence -a part of new identities in the planetary society- is a process of openness to new cultural experiences: confronting and modifying basic -culturally learned- emotions, like fear and anxieties; recognizing otherness as new, not a projection or extension of one's own -culturally acquired- vision of the world.

Only on these bases reciprocity becomes feasible, and it will be possible to display empathy, concern and responsibility in the intercultural relationship, that crucial ingredient of sustainable societies, like Europe aims to become.

Venice, November 2010

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