

**An integrated model for
teacher training in
multicultural contexts**

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PAPERS ON TEACHER TRAINING AND MULTICULTURAL/ INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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**papers on teacher training and
multicultural/intercultural education**

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***"An integrated Model for Teacher Training in
Multicultural Contexts."***

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KEY WORDS: - teacher training - multicultural education - intercultural education - pupils' conceptions - pupils' attitudes - teachers' conceptions - teachers' attitudes - community-centred approach - learner-centred approach - territorial approach.

SYNTHESIS: The activities and the preliminary results of the IBE's research project on teacher training for intercultural education "Basic Education for Participation and Democracy: Key Issues in Human Resources Development (Teachers and Multicultural/ Intercultural Education") are presented. The preliminary results show the importance of reshaping teacher training in multicultural contexts. The main issues are to change teachers' negative attitudes concerning pupils' communities and concerning learning and teaching; to develop teachers' capacities for analyzing pupils' conceptions, attitudes and learning obstacles; to integrate information about pupils' culture; to integrate information about the main problems related to the quality of life; to develop teachers' capacity to educate towards sustainable development and integrated with education towards tolerance and mutual understanding; and to develop teachers' capacity for a territorial approach. An integrated model of teacher training for multicultural/ intercultural education is discussed.

project "basic education for participation and democracy: key issues in human resources development" (teacher training and multicultural/intercultural education)

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stimulates the pupils' self-esteem by developing their knowledge about the characteristics and the achievements of their own community. It also enables negative attitudes towards other communities to be overcome through knowledge of their characteristics and their achievements.

- **Decision makers and those responsible for education are frequently not particularly aware of the problems caused by cultural and linguistic differences in classrooms or they pay little attention to these problems. Any improvement of education in multicultural contexts starts with awareness of pupils' difficulties among those responsible for education.**
- **Cultural and language diversity is frequently understood as a negative element in education. However, they can be a source of resources in classroom activities if teachers are capable of accepting pupils' conceptions and knowledge and stimulate pupils to share them. Pupils' family life, pupils' cultural background and pupils' experiences can be important resources for teaching. This approach stimulates pupils' self-esteem and can help them to surmount shyness and discriminatory feelings by developing mutual understanding and solidarity between pupils from different communities.**
- **Mono-cultural education sets homogeneous educational objectives for all the population. However, different communities can have different educational objectives. To accept these differences and to adapt school to them is an important issue for schools in multicultural contexts. This can be a difficult point when communities have very different objectives. In this case a "bicultural school" seems a possible solution. Teacher training should include information about the educational objectives of the different communities and how to integrate them in curricula.**
- **It is necessary to help teachers to surmount ethnocentrism and negative attitudes against minorities. This attitude is an obstacle for understanding the pupils' cultures and accepting pupils' particularities. The analysis of teachers' conceptions and attitudes concerning pupils' communities is an important factor in organizing teacher training in favour of multicultural/ intercultural education.**
- **Learning is not simply the acquisition of new information. Rather it is a complex process of transforming conceptual frameworks. The learning processes depend on a web of ideas, beliefs, logical abilities, language, knowledge and skills that individuals develop and use for integrating new information and building new knowledge and skills. This web is organised in a system called a "cognitive system". It may facilitate the learning of some knowledge and the development of some skills, while hindering the learning of others. By identifying the obstacles to students' learning, teachers can design training programmes that help the student to overcome them. Learning obstacles can be affective, religious, cultural, logical or conceptual.**
- **The meaning given to information depends on conceptions, beliefs and**

attitudes. If pupils have different conceptions, beliefs and attitudes compared to the teachers, they can give different meanings to the information transmitted by them. Teacher training should provide teachers with elements for understanding and solving this problem.

- **Multicultural/intercultural education needs a particular capacity to adapt teaching to pupils' characteristics in a learner-centred approach.** Some teachers' conceptions and attitudes concerning teaching, and learning can obstruct the development of this capacity. For example, teachers frequently think that "to teach" is identical "to transmit information" and to learn is equivalent "to listen and to remember". These teachers are not very concerned by pupils' characteristics and they do not adapt teaching to pupils' learning difficulties. Teacher training should help teachers to modify these conceptions and to develop the capacity to take into account pupils' characteristics and learning difficulties in a learner-centred approach. Therefore, the analysis of teachers' conceptions and attitudes about teaching and learning is an important element in teacher training.
- **One important element to take into account in teaching is the "temporal structure" of pupils (monochrome or polychrone).** The differences between the temporal structure can be a source of misunderstanding between teachers and pupils. Teacher training should inform teachers about the pupils' temporal organization and develop their capacity to adapt their teaching to it.
- **Understanding pupils' learning difficulties is a fundamental element in any educational activity, particularly when the teacher comes from a community different from that of the pupils.** The analysis of pupils' conceptions and attitudes is an important component in a learner-centred approach. Teacher training for multicultural/intercultural education should include methods for analysing pupils' conceptions, attitudes, and learning obstacles, and should develop strategies and methods for helping pupils to overcome them.
- **Frequently, teachers have problems in communicating with pupils from different cultures.** If teachers do not know the basic rules of communication used by pupils they can have difficulties in establishing good relations with pupils. Another related problem is caused by pupils' taboos. If teachers do not take into account pupils' taboos they can hurt pupils' sensibility and provoke feeling of rejection. Teachers in multicultural contexts should learn and use the communication rules of the pupils' communities and should be aware of pupils' taboos, adapting their activity to them.
- **Some research results suggest that there are positive correlations between pupils' culture and some learning difficulties.** For example, pupils from cultures and languages without mathematical concepts have numerous problems in mathematics. However, the lack of this capacity does not mean that they do not have other capacities that can be used in teaching. Some successful experiences suggest that integrating traditional activities can help pupils to surmount these

learning difficulties. For example, the capacity to understand very complex systems of kin relationships, the capacity to undertake traditional activities, or knowledge about the territory. Therefore, the analysis of culture and learning difficulties and the strategies and methods for helping pupils to overcome them are important elements in teacher training in multicultural contexts.

- **Different cultures have different "learning styles".** To adapt teaching to pupils' learning styles can facilitate learning and solve some of the pupils' difficulties.
- **Pupils are ethnocentric and frequently have negative attitudes and conceptions about other cultural and ethnic groups.** Helping pupils to understand other communities and to develop solidarity with them is a fundamental factor for peace and democracy. Teacher training should include methods for analyzing pupils' attitudes and the strategies and methods for developing understanding and solidarity between different communities.
- **Pupils' language development is a fundamental educational issue in multicultural contexts.** Children who have limited capacity in the teaching language have many difficulties in achieving the necessary levels of language proficiency. This situation augments the probability of poor school achievements. Particularly bad is the situation of children coming from families with impoverished language skills or migrant children who have not the opportunity to speak fluently neither the mother language nor the dominant language. The outcomes of some research suggest that bilingual children, who do not speak either language well, have special learning difficulties. Effective multilingual education needs the participation of all teachers, and not only language teachers. Teachers should be trained in methods for analyzing pupils' language development as well as in methods for helping pupils to develop their mother language.
- **A characteristic of racism and xenophobia is the proclivity to accept simplistic answers to complex problems.** To avoid the trap of simplistic answers it is necessary to have the capacity to understand complex systems, with networks of causality processes, such as social systems and environmental systems. Some research results show that pupils frequently do not develop this capacity. Teacher must be trained in helping pupils to develop the capacity to understand complex systems and to avoid simplistic thinking. This is an example of the possibility of integrating teacher training for multicultural/ intercultural education with teacher training for education towards sustainable development.
- **Pupils from minorities frequently have big health, social and economic problems.** Education for sustainable development adapted to the improvement of the quality of life in different communities can help solve these problems. One of the important objectives of education towards sustainable development is to improve the capacity to negotiate and the capacity for organizing collective activities. This is another example of the possible integration of education towards sustainable development with multicultural/intercultural education.

- **Multicultural education needs a community-centred approach.** Therefore, teacher training needs to include basic information about ethnic and cultural groups, such as traditional knowledge, religion, taboos, language, social organization, communication rules, temporal organization, etc. However, it is important to avoid the stereotypes about the community developed frequently by teachers that are an obstacle to understand pupils' problems. Teacher training should develop teacher capacity for using the basic information about pupils' communities while developing teachers' capacity for adapting teaching to real pupils.
- **Each community has its own empirical knowledge transmitted to new generations through tales, stories, songs, proverbs, etc.** It is important to encourage the integration of traditional knowledge in teaching (in particular in science teaching), facilitating learning, allowing pupils to learn about their own community, developing cultural identity and self-esteem and permitting the conservation of empirical knowledge that would otherwise be lost. This integration is the basis for developing the national capacity for sustainable development founded in the use of all the resources and knowledge and the participation of all the communities. Teachers should be trained in the use of traditional knowledge in science teaching and in other subjects.
- **The participation of pupils' families in school activities is an important element in the pupils' achievement.** Teacher training should develop the capacity for establishing good communication with the families of pupils from the different communities and stimulate them to participate more actively in school activities.
- **Training materials are frequently mono-cultural, presenting only a "dominant ethnic and cultural model".** This kind of material may harm the feelings of pupils from minorities and can reinforce discriminatory conceptions and attitudes. Multicultural education needs training material presenting all cultures and the history of all communities. Teachers should be trained about the production of multicultural training materials.
- **Teachers should be trained in education for conflict management.** This training can provide teachers with concepts and methods for developing pupils' capacity to manage conflicts and for stimulating pupils' active participation in solving peacefully the conflicts between communities.

3.2 The necessity of educational research at the local level.

Multicultural/intercultural education needs precise information about pupils' communities. This information should be updated permanently in order to know the cultural, social and economic changes of the different communities. Research for obtaining and updating this information should be carried out at local level. The information obtained should be incorporated in teacher training and transmitted to teachers. Therefore, a well-organized system of research and transmission of the information is an important element in multicultural/intercultural education.

Another necessary piece of information in multicultural contexts concerns the main learning obstacles for pupils. This information is necessary in order to adapt teaching to pupils' difficulties. Comparative educational research should be organized for obtaining this information.

3.3 The "ideal profile" of a teacher in a multicultural context: a researcher.

The problems mentioned in point 3.1 are difficult to solve. They require information about pupils and about their communities. However, communities and pupils change. New information is therefore necessary. This situation can be resolved if teachers have the capacity to analyze their pupils as an on-going activity, and adapting their teaching to the transformations. In other words, teachers should be "researchers in the classroom", analyzing pupils' learning obstacles and using strategies and contents adapted to them. Therefore, teachers in multicultural contexts should not only be capable of establishing good communication with their pupils, but they should have an "open mind" and a "scientific approach to teaching". Our experience shows that teachers can not only develop these attitudes and capacities, but they can also gain from analyzing pupils' conceptions and learning obstacles, developing the capacity to integrate this analysis in their daily activities.

3.4 The integrated model of teacher training for multicultural/intercultural education.

The Project is preparing an "integrated model of teacher training for multicultural/intercultural education", including research methods for analysing future teachers' conceptions and attitudes concerning pupils' communities, research methods for analysing pupils' conceptions and attitudes and learning obstacles, information about pupils' communities, information about education towards sustainable development and the territorial approach, and a synthesis of successful experiences in teacher training for multicultural/intercultural education. The integrated model should be developed in each country because it incorporates information from the local level. The integrated model will permit:

- Helping teachers to overcome ethnocentrism and negative conceptions and attitudes about pupils' communities.
- Developing teachers' capacities to help pupils overcome negative conceptions about other communities.
- Educating teachers about the history and the characteristics of different communities (culture, social organization, religion, kinship organization, taboos, communication rules, temporal organization, relationships with environmental systems, relationships with other communities, main economic activities, etc.) and developing their capacity to exploit this information in teaching.

- Educating teachers about traditional knowledge circulating within communities and developing their capacity to exploit this information in teaching.
- Training teachers about methods for analysing the pupils' conceptions and learning obstacles and increasing their capacity to adapt teaching in accordance to this information.
- Increasing teachers' capacity for solving the learning obstacles caused by pupils' lack of language development, in particular for bilingual children who may have limited skills in either of two languages.
- Informing teachers that some cultures and languages lack mathematical and scientific elements and developing their capacity to exploit traditional elements in teaching, such as kinship relationships.
- Educating teachers about the main obstacles which prevent the participation of the pupils' families in school activities and developing their capacity to establish good relationships with the pupils' families and communities.
- Informing teachers about the main problems related to the quality of life in communities (housing, environmental degradation, employment, health, etc.) and developing their capacity to become "agents for sustainable development" in the pupils' communities.
- Developing teachers' capacity for integrating different disciplines in a global approach focused on the analysis of the characteristics and the resources of the territory, its use by different communities and the environmental impacts caused by human activities.
- Increasing national capacity for preparing teaching materials adapted to the different communities.

3.3 Activities for preparing an integrated model for teacher training of multicultural/intercultural education.

The model will be developed at national level by experts who will carry out the following activities:

- Organizing comparative research about future teachers' ethnocentrism and their conceptions and attitudes concerning pupils' communities.
- Designing, selecting and evaluating methods in order to overcome future teachers' ethnocentrism and negative attitudes concerning pupils' communities.
- Analysing the main learning difficulties of pupils from different communities (difficulties in developing a capacity for abstraction among some bilingual pupils,

language difficulties, taboos, lack of basic scientific and technical concepts, difficulties originating in different communication rules, difficulties originating in different temporal organizations, ethnocentrism, negative attitudes concerning others communities, etc.).

- Selecting, evaluating and adapting appropriate training methods so as to help pupils overcome the main learning difficulties.
- Collecting folk tales, proverbs, etc., and analysing traditional knowledge from different communities.
- Designing strategies in order to incorporate traditional knowledge and folk tales in multicultural education.
- Analysing the main economic and social problems and those related to the quality of life of different communities (health, housing, employment, discrimination. etc.).
- Analysing the use of environmental resources in different communities and the negative environmental impacts.
- Selecting, evaluating and adapting educational methods for sustainable development adequate to different communities.

The results obtained will be used in the following activities:

- To prepare an integrated curricula of teacher training for multicultural/ intercultural education based on the integrated model developed by the Project.
- To put forward proposals for educational policies applicable in teacher training for multicultural/intercultural education.
- To propose teacher training strategies and methods for multicultural/ intercultural education.
- To prepare and distribute documents on teacher training for multicultural/ intercultural education.
- To organize seminars on teacher training for multicultural/intercultural education addressed to decision makers and those responsible for teacher training institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

The preliminary results of the activities of the first year of the Project suggests that developing teachers' capacity for multicultural/intercultural education means providing them with information about pupils' communities and training them about how to use this information in teaching. Multicultural/ intercultural education also

needs to develop the teachers' capacity for communicating with pupils from different cultures. Teachers should also be trained in methods for analyzing pupils' conceptions and learning obstacles. They should know how to teach about sustainable development and how to train pupils to improve the quality of life. Therefore, teacher training for multicultural education should be a blend of information and pedagogical methods. It must not be reduced to a few lessons about pupils' culture or an isolated discipline. Instead, it should permeate all the disciplines of teacher education. Training teachers in multicultural/intercultural education is not sufficient if teachers are ethnocentric and if have negative conceptions and attitudes concerning pupils' communities. Therefore, teacher training should include activities for analysing teachers' conceptions and attitudes. It should also include activities for helping teachers to change negative attitudes concerning pupils' communities and to surmount ethnocentrism.

All these elements are used in an integrated model for teacher training developed by the Project. This model should be developed at country level, and should integrate strategies and methods for analyzing pupils' conceptions and attitudes with information about pupils' communities in a package designed to help pupils to understand and solve the issues related to sustainable development.

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19. La Formation des Enseignants pour l'Education Interculturelle au Liban, Etude Nationale, by Nabil Nicolas Constantine.
20. Teaching Basic Scientific Knowledge to Traditional Communities, by Raúl Gagliardi.
21. Formation des maîtres tunisiens et éducation interculturelle, by Mohamed Miled (coordinator).
22. Interculturalidad y formación docente en Bolivia: Primer informe de avance de una investigación en curso, by Luis Enrique López.
23. Interculturalidad, educación técnica y formación docente en Bolivia, by Luis Antonio Rodriguez Bazán and Oscar Chávez Gonzales.
24. Un modelo integrado para la formación docente en contextos multiculturales, by Raúl Gagliardi.
25. Obstáculos al aprendizaje - obstáculos a la enseñanza en contextos multiculturales, by Raúl Gagliardi.