A MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION
BASED ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOL
Olga Konstantinidou[1]

Abstract: *This article is the first of a three-part series on intercultural education in multicultural schools. It explores the theoretical foundations and practical implications of intercultural education, with a focus on the conceptualization of culture and cultural difference. It investigates two opposing theoretical directions: cultural ecumenism and cultural relativism, and their influence on intercultural education. It emphasizes key concepts such as recognizing the Other and transformational pedagogy to empower culturally diverse students in the classroom. The objective of the study is to conduct a comprehensive literature review and to employ a questionnaire in order to propose pedagogical principles for effectively managing cultural diversity in secondary schools.*

Keywords: *intercultural education; multicultural schools; cultural diversity; cultural ecumenism; cultural relativism; transformational pedagogy; cultural differences; multiculturalism.*

Introduction

Cultural differences play a significant role in education, especially with the emergence of multiculturalism. This article explores two opposing theoretical directions: cultural ecumenism and cultural relativism, and their influence on intercultural education. Recognizing the Other and transformational pedagogy are key concepts that emphasize the importance of empowering culturally diverse students in the classroom. The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive literature review and to utilize a questionnaire in order to propose pedagogical principles for effectively managing cultural diversity in multicultural schools. The specific focus is on the intercultural teaching of literature in secondary education.

Literature Review

Cultural differences and intercultural education have become crucial topics in the context of multicultural societies. The following sections explore various dimensions and concepts related to the intercultural model of education and its implications for managing cultural diversity in secondary schools.

Modern societies of the 21st century are characterized by cultural diversity, necessitating the coexistence of culturally diverse social groups within a unified political formation. With its descriptive, regulatory and critical dimensions, multiculturalism recognizes and promotes equal coexistence, equal rights and access opportunities (Boguslavskii & Neborskii, 2016). It raises questions about coexistence,

[1] **Olga Konstantinidou** – PhD student at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy; email: olga.ki16@windowslive.com

citizenship, and the conditions of the liberal state. There are different approaches and models of multicultural society, such as ethnic multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, left-liberal multiculturalism, and critical-reflective multiculturalism. Multiculturalism emphasizes the recognition of cultural differences (Elias & Mansouri, 2020; Bello & Bloom, 2017).

The increasing influx of immigrants and repatriation of Greek immigrants have transformed Greek society into a multicultural society. The Greek school is faced with the challenge of addressing the needs of immigrant students. Multiculturalism is a reality that cannot be ignored and requires school reform at multiple levels. The school has a responsibility to create conditions for the acceptance and recognition of otherness, supporting social and cultural integration. The multicultural character of the Greek school reflects the values of a just multicultural society and the need for equal political participation and cultural representation (Taylor, 2012; Catarci, 2016).

The intercultural model of education has emerged as a contemporary pedagogical proposal for managing ethnocultural differences in multicultural societies. It aims to overcome the limitations of previous educational models (assimilative, integration, multicultural, anti-racist) in addressing cultural diversity in school settings. The intercultural model originated in Europe in the 1980s and has been promoted by organizations such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the European Union. The Council of Europe's final report on the education and cultural development of migrants (1986) outlines key features of intercultural education, including its focus on children's direct experiences in host countries, the mutual influence of cultures of origin and host countries, the review of socio-centric and ethnocentric school criteria, and its role in evaluating opportunities in life and achieving integration (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2011; Mampaey & Zanoni, 2016).

While the term 'intercultural education' is widely used, there is no concensus among experts regarding its exact content. It encompasses a broad concept that includes various school practices, curricula, and materials designed to promote educational equality for children from different groups. Different scholars and states have different interpretations of intercultural education, leading to confusion and to a lack of a universally accepted definition. The term carries ideological implications and reflects values, goals, and specific practices. Despite these challenges, intercultural education aims to receive and embrace linguistic and cultural diversity in school classes, avoiding conflicts and promoting cultural exchanges, enrichment, human rights, respect, and equal distribution of power and wealth (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018; Barrett, 2013).

Theorists have proposed specific principles for intercultural education, including empathy training, education for solidarity and intercultural respect, and education against ethnocentric thinking. The basic principles governing intercultural education include recognizing the parity of cultures and their interaction, ensuring equal opportunities for education and life, and considering cultural conditions the starting point and goal of intercultural pedagogy (Collin & Tynjälä, 2003).

Intercultural education is a pedagogical programme that supports critical engagement with sociohistorical and sociocultural factors that shape identities. It aims to deconstruct traditional, ethnocentric education, and to construct a supracultural identity that transcends cultural boundaries. It seeks to transform schools and society, providing individuals and collective personalities with the means to express themselves and to pursue cultural identity, freedom, and self-fulfillment. Intercultural education requires continuous interaction, flexible communication, and enrichment among partners (Petridou, 2016; Cantle, 2016; Bouchard, 2018).

In conclusion, the intercultural model of education is considered an integrated approach to education, promoting equality, mutual understanding, and acceptance in multicultural societies. It recognizes and respects the educational capital of minority children, challenging the deficit perspective. Intercultural education is essential in multinational and multicultural societies, but its exact definition and implementation continue to be topics of debate.

Methodology

This study adopts a comprehensive research approach, utilizing both a literature review and a questionnaire to investigate the intercultural model of education and its practical application in managing cultural diversity in secondary schools. The literature review encompasses a thorough analysis of scholarly works, reports, and theoretical frameworks that contribute to a holistic understanding of cultural ecumenism, cultural relativism, social recognition, and transformational pedagogy.

Through the literature review, this study aims to establish a strong foundation of knowledge and theoretical insights, enabling the formulation of pedagogical principles for the effective integration of intercultural teaching practices in the context of secondary education. This approach seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives and practical implications, offering valuable guidance for educators in fostering intercultural understanding and promoting a harmonious learning environment.

In addition to the literature review, a questionnaire has been developed and incorporated into the study. It serves as a means of gathering empirical data directly from teachers who play a pivotal role in implementing intercultural education in the classroom. The questionnaire focuses on eliciting teachers' perspectives, experiences, and opinions regarding intercultural education, its goals, challenges, and potential benefits. By combining the insights derived from the literature review with the firsthand knowledge obtained through the questionnaire, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the intercultural model of education in secondary schools.

By employing a multidimensional research approach, this study endeavours to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on intercultural education and to offer practical recommendations for enhancing the educational experience of diverse student populations in secondary schools.

Results

The results of this study contribute to the theoretical foundations and practical implementation of intercultural education in the context of multicultural schools. Through a comprehensive bibliographic investigation, the paper critically examines the theoretical directions of cultural ecumenism and relativism, as well as the theories of social recognition, with a focus on their implications for intercultural education. The specific objectives of the study include analyzing how these theoretical directions approach the concept of culture and cultural difference, understanding their impact on intercultural education, and identifying the potential dangers of applying extreme theoretical assumptions to intercultural education.

The findings highlight the importance of addressing cultural difference in the daily teaching practice, and emphasize the need for a balanced approach that recognizes both the commonalities and differences between cultures. It is essential to avoid inadvertently reinforcing a hierarchy between one's own culture and the culture of others while promoting the recognition and appreciation of cultural expressions of all students. The study also emphasizes the significance of utilizing the cultural capital of immigrant students and of enriching the learning experience of all students through intercultural teaching.

Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of fostering positive interactions among students from different cultural backgrounds, moving away from a monocultural orientation in education. By challenging cultural stereotypes and creating conditions conducive to intercultural dialogue, an inclusive and equitable learning environment can be established. The study suggests that intercultural communication should be promoted, allowing all voices to be heard on an equal footing.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the theoretical and practical challenges associated with cultural diversity in education. The multicultural composition of modern societies has made cultural differences more visible, leading to debates on the recognition of diversity and to tension between cultural relativism and universality. The paper argues that the intercultural approach to education has been influenced by opposing views on culture and cultural differences, leading to theoretical confrontations and dilemmas.

The study acknowledges the dilemmas surrounding the acceptance of cultural parity and the relativity or universality of values in intercultural education. The theoretical dialogue between proponents of cultural universality and cultural relativity forms the basis for discussions on interculturalism and its

pedagogical implications. It is crucial to critically examine the role of cultural differences in hegemony, stigmatization, and the construction of 'foreignness' in the context of intercultural education.

The discussion also highlights the need for interculturalization of curricula and the application of intercultural principles in teaching practice. The study recognizes the importance of redefining the goals, materials, and teaching methods of the course to align with the principles of intercultural education. Researchers emphasize that the didactics of the course should promote intercultural communication and understanding, challenging ethnocentrism and embracing cultural solidarity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to the theoretical and practical understanding of intercultural education in multicultural schools. By critically examining the theoretical directions of cultural ecumenism and relativism, as well as the theories of social recognition, the research provides insights into the conceptualization of culture and cultural difference in the context of intercultural education. The findings emphasize the importance of balancing the recognition of cultural diversity with the promotion of cultural inclusivity and appreciation.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the literature review, the study formulates general pedagogical principles for managing cultural difference in the multicultural classroom. These principles aim to avoid cultural differentiation and hierarchy, to recognize and utilize the cultural capital of immigrant students, to foster positive interactions among students from diverse backgrounds, and to promote intercultural communication.

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