

VADEMECUM ON INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION



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Introduction

This document is elaborated in the framework of the NICER project and provides background conceptual and theoretical elements, as well as practical guidelines for the implementation of intercultural education activities involving young refugees. It is conceived particularly as a support for the series of workshops planned with mixed groups of refugees and non-refugees in the framework of the NICER project but can be useful in the planning and organisation of various types of educational interventions related to the interaction between refugees and local young people, as well as other intercultural situations. It is important to specify that the aim is not “to educate the refugees” but to work on the self-perceptions and on the mutual perceptions and relationships of both refugees and local young people.

This document should be seen as complementing the methodological guidelines produced directly for the NICER workshops and the pedagogical guide for intercultural education.

The document is structured in five main parts:

Part 1 reviews and clarifies some of the key concepts relevant for the topic and the target groups. It also underlines some challenges related to finding an appropriate terminology, considering the misuse of some concepts in the political and public discourse, as well as the multiple meanings some concepts might have from different theoretical perspectives.

Part 2 describes concepts, processes and social phenomena related to barriers limiting the integration and social inclusion of refugees in a host society.

Part 3 presents a critical review of strategies for promoting positive intercultural attitudes and relationships, including some false solutions and some effective ones.

Part 4 discusses interculturalism and democratic culture as major references for a desirable society.

Part 5 outlines general elements related to intercultural education.

Considering that this is a document targeting practitioners and not academics, the style and language have been chosen accordingly. The references are mentioned at the end and there are only a few cases where authors of certain theoretical models are mentioned in the text.

As in the case of practically all concepts of social sciences, there is no absolute consensus among academics regarding the way the concepts presented here should be understood. Therefore, for practical reasons, choices have been made to present those elements of the academic debate which are relevant for the practitioners. In the case of several concepts, the debates and controversies which occurred in the project team are also reflected.

It has to be emphasised that this document has an explicit focus on education, particularly non-formal education, and does not envisage public policies in other sectors related to the integration of refugees or the management of cultural diversity in general.

Key concepts

Refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, migrants

Migrant - A person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

Refugee - A person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (Art. 1(A)(2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol).

Asylum seeker - A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, the person must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any non-national in an irregular or unlawful situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds.

General principles and conceptual challenges

The common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union, adopted in 2004 and reaffirmed in 2014 define "integration" as "a dynamic, long-term, and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation, not a static outcome. It demands the participation not only of immigrants and their descendants but of every resident. The integration process involves adaptation by immigrants, both men and women, who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence. It also involves the receiving society, which should create the opportunities for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation."

The document also states that integration has to be grounded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. Furthermore, integration policies and practices should take as reference the provisions of the Charter of fundamental rights of the Union, which enshrine the concepts of dignity, freedom, equality and non-discrimination, solidarity, citizen's rights, and justice.

These ideas are also emphasized and developed in the Third European Module on Migrant Integration, published by the European Commission in 2014.

However, transposing these general principles into policies and practices at national level is a process facing numerous challenges and some of these challenges are related to the words used and the concepts behind them.

Two types of challenges need to be mentioned when discussing about the terminology used with regards to policies related to the presence of migrants in general and of refugees in particular in European societies.

The first is related to the gaps and inconsistencies between the use of various concepts in the common language, in the media and in the political discourse, on one side, and the scientific meaning of these concepts, on the other side.

The second challenge is related to the fact that in some cases the same words are used even in scientific publications with different meanings, depending on the field of study to which authors are connected and sometimes also to the national or linguistic contexts of these publications.

In particular, there are controversies in which these challenges are manifested with regards to the use of the terms “integration” and “inclusion”.

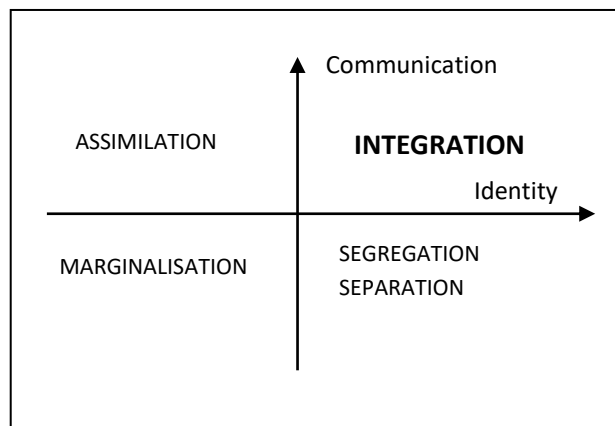
In the following section the ways these concepts are understood in scientific publications is presented and a distinction is made with regards of the misuse of these terms in common language, media and political discourse.

Integration and inclusion

The concept of integration has been widely used in research on migration, mainly from a social psychological perspective, since 1980. It refers to the choice migrants have with regards to their cultural affiliation (Berry, 1980).

Refugees are persons forced to leave their country and seek support in a host country. The return to the former home country is not possible or it is dangerous for a relatively long period of time.

Refugees are therefore in a situation where they live in a cultural environment which may differ in many ways from their previous cultural background and they have to decide, on one side, how they relate to the cultural elements that differentiate them from the locals and, on the other side, how they relate to the host society. There are four options resulting from these two types of choice: integration, assimilation, marginalisation, separation or segregation, as shown in the diagram. Thus, integration is seen as the situation in which migrants maintain, develop and assert, in the public space and in conditions of equality, the consciousness of a common belonging, together with specific cultural characteristics and practices, while also



engaging in communication and cooperation interactions with the rest of society, especially with the members of the majority group. Thus, this is the desirable situation which public policies and the strategies that underlie their development and implementation should tend towards. If we apply this

model in order to analyse the situation of refugees in Europe, we can notice that there are people and communities that can be found in all the situations illustrated in the diagram but the most acute and visible problems are those associated with marginalized communities, which are simultaneously affected by poverty and social exclusion.

As the diagram illustrates, according to this model, integration is opposed to segregation, but it is also clearly differentiated from assimilation. More recent models (Bourhis, 1997, 2010) emphasise the fact that integration is an important concept used also in relation to the attitudes with regards to cultural differences and living together in society of both migrants and locals.

The concept of social inclusion is another important concept used in this context and it may have two totally different meanings, depending to the field of study.

Thus, social inclusion is understood in the field of social work in opposition with social exclusion. Social exclusion is defined by Silver (2007) as “a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live”. The notion of social inclusion is therefore the opposite process, of re-creating connections between socially excluded groups and individuals and the rest of the society, through a series of social support measures.

Social inclusion is also used in the framework of addressing the issues education of people with special needs and in general the issue of people with disabilities. In this context the term integration is used with a totally different meaning, referring for example to the fact that children with disabilities are integrated into mainstream education. This is seen as a positive process compared to the segregation in special schools, but insufficient because it requires a unilateral adaptation to the existing institutional framework. From this perspective, an approach focused on inclusion proposes a step forward and requires rethinking of the institutional framework in such a way as to correspond to the needs of all children, based on the recognition of the fact that they have equal rights (UNESCO, 1994, 2009).

Therefore, both integration and inclusion are used with different meanings in different scientific disciplines. Additionally, both concepts are misused in public and political discourse. On one side, in common language and political discourse the term integration is often used with the meaning of assimilation. On the other side, social inclusion is often used by assimilationists to deny the pertinence of addressing cultural differences and the right people have to maintain and develop a specific cultural identity. It is considered from this perspective that groups like refugees or disadvantaged minorities should be treated as being in need only of social support, with their needs to maintain and affirm a specific cultural affiliation denied.

Many refugees are affected by marginalisation, poverty and social exclusion and these aspects need to be addressed. However, if we pay attention exclusively to the social dimension and consider that we only have a “culture of poverty” and a vicious circle of exclusion which includes elements connected to education, employment, housing and healthcare, we reject essential phenomena such as those connected to racism and discrimination based on ethnic or religious affiliation, which frequently affect the refugees. On the other hand, an approach which attributes an ethno-cultural dimension to situations of social disadvantage does not correspond to reality either; quite the

contrary, it sometimes justifies an essentialist perspective, associated with segregationist and exclusionist tendencies or with views which deny the responsibility of the majority society and dispute the opportunity and possibility for corrective intervention.

The concept of integration, as described above, refers only to the cultural dimension. It can be promoted effectively in society only if key aspects related to respect of human rights, democracy, equality and participation are promoted by public policies.

We consider therefore that it is necessary to adopt an approach which combines the acknowledgement of ethno-cultural aspects together with the factors which lead to social exclusion, in accordance with the Common basic principles of immigrant integration adopted by the European Commission in 2004.

The concepts described below help understand the challenges that often undermine efforts directed towards achieving both integration and inclusion.

Beyond the challenges related to terminology, the vision promoted by this document is one of a society which values cultural diversity and ensures equal political, cultural and social rights for all its members, regardless of their origin or cultural affiliation and encourages civic participation and cooperation.

Culture and cultural differences

Culture can be understood in many ways and the fact that it is a multifaceted concept is often a source of misunderstandings. According to UNESCO, culture includes “knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.” Culture can also be seen as referring to a “fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the "meaning" of other people's behaviour.” (Spencer-Oatey, 2000).



In fact, the two definitions concern different levels of culture and if we consider both of them we can see culture like an iceberg.

The “iceberg model” of culture emphasises that there are visible expressions of culture but that there is also a much more extended set of hidden elements that influence people but are not explicit and are often unconscious.

The definitions of culture mentioned above refer to society and groups, not to countries and nations. Various groups and subgroups, including groups defined based on ethno-cultural criteria, but also on geographic, professional, ideological or other criteria, may be described using this model. This means that, when looking at the world, we should not see it as a puzzle, where every piece has its place near other pieces, but as a complex and multi-layered aggregate where parts may overlap and where borders are not always clearly visible.

When analysing any two groups, one can find similarities and differences at the visible or at the invisible levels. Also all larger groups have internal cultural variability, which may make members of two subgroups more different between themselves than compared with somebody from another group.

One should not infer that a person living in a certain country, or region, or belonging to a specific ethnic or religious group, must necessarily correspond to the pattern of beliefs and behaviours usually associated with these groups. People have different personalities, with features that may contradict certain cultural prescriptions. Also, any person belongs simultaneously to a variety of groups and the specific attitudes and behaviours in a certain context may be determined by a conscious or unconscious choice of a reference group for that context. Moreover, many persons feel that they belong simultaneously not only to different groups defined by different criteria, but also to several groups defined by the same criteria (multiple cultural affiliations). Thus, considering the complexity of the elements described above, it is preferable to speak about cultural affiliations of people than of cultures.

The cultures of all groups and societies are permanently in evolution. Some change very slowly and may be perceived as static, but changes occur everywhere. In some cases, changes are encouraged and supported, while in other cases they face resistance and are labelled as a loss of authenticity. A major source of cultural change is represented by the interactions between people with different cultural affiliations.

Ethnicity versus communautarisme

Ethnicity: ethnic groups and boundaries

Like the concept of race, the concept of ethnicity is often contested. However, unlike the concept of race, ethnicity is associated by people across the world with a positive identity and having the right to affirm your ethnic identity is perceived by many as important.

There are several views on the source of cultural differences as reflected in the identity of ethnic groups. The three most important ones, naturalism, culturalism and interactionism or constructivism are described below.

Naturalism is a view that justifies ethnic differences with biological and genetic arguments. Inspired by Darwinism, naturalism emphasises the genetic connections and the biological parenting relationships between members of an ethnic group. This approach risks leading to justifying

hierarchical relationships between groups in society, to disapproval of mixed marriages and even to acceptance of ideas concerning ethnic cleansing, racism or segregation. An analysis of the current situation in Europe shows that there are no “pure” groups from the biological point of view and therefore this approach has no scientific pertinence but despite that, many people take such a perspective, sometimes without realising its consequences.

Culturalism puts ‘culture’ at the centre of inter-group differences. Culture is understood here from an essentialist perspective, and seen fixed, unchangeable and in need of protection against external influences. People supporting such a view are ready to accept segregation or superficial “dialogue between cultures” but reject the idea of cultural interferences. Sometimes, people adopting a culturalist perspective also justify a hierarchical order of cultures and consider that “more advanced” cultures have the legitimacy to assimilate the “inferior” ones.

Interactionist or constructivist views on ethnicity start from the analysis of the psychological mechanisms of construction and development of a group identity through interactions between people. Key elements in this process are the way ethnic boundaries are defined, to determine who is part of the group and who is not and the specific identity markers associated with group belonging. From this perspective the subjective dimension is essential: member must have the feeling of belonging to the group but they also need to acknowledge each other as members of the group. Constructivist or interactionist perspective is the only one that actually acknowledges cultural change and welcomes it. It does not deny the importance of specific cultural features within a group and of the differences between groups but sees them as relative and dynamic.

It is this last perspective of ethnicity that is compatible with the view of society promoted in this document.

Anti-communautarisme: denial of the right to belong

Communautarisme is a French word and it has a specific meaning in this language, so it should not be translated. Even in French it has different meanings but we refer here to the meaning that is most commonly used in public discourse. It started to be used widely in 1995 after the terrorist attack in a subway station in Paris and its use increased even more after “September 11” 2001 terrorist attacks. Its use is pejorative and it is presented as a menace for the Republic.

In fact, it disapproves, considers suspicious or even dangerous any attempt to affirm in the public space a specific cultural belonging other than the French one. Its main argument is that those who promote any type of ethno-cultural belonging actually aim at controlling the opinions, belief and behaviours of group members, therefore limiting their freedom. In reality those who denounce communautarisme support, explicitly or implicitly an assimilationist approach and deny an important right people should have, the right to affirm, if they so wish, specific elements related to their ethno-cultural belonging, provided that they do not contradict the principle of equality of rights and respect for the others.

Cultural differences, social inequality and power relations

Considering the perspective on culture and ethnicity presented earlier, we can agree that practically cultural differences or differences in cultural practices exist between various groups in society. However, associating differences between groups in society only with cultural differences would be wrong and would reflect a culturalist approach.

There are inequalities between groups in society, reflected in a variety of indicators, from the level of education, to housing, health or employment, which are determined by socio-economic factors and by the social status.

Additionally, these inequalities are in general associated to unbalanced power relations and to differences in access to power and in influence in decision-making in society. Groups with a higher social status tend to have more power and influence in society. Also, there are various subtle mechanisms that result in the reproduction and perpetuation of these inequalities and unbalanced power relations over time, despite the fact that society is based on the principle of equality in rights of all citizens and often even despite the existence of explicit public policies promoting ascending social mobility.

The situation becomes even more problematic when we recognise the specific situation of groups which are in the same time:

- Culturally different from the majority society;
- Having a low social status in society;
- Facing economic hardships and having a low socio-economic status.

In such cases, addressing only the issue of cultural difference, without considering socio-economic inequality and social status, as a way to achieve equality or opportunities will not be effective.

However, measures and activities ignoring cultural differences and focusing only on the other aspects also risks undermining effectiveness.

This is often the case with groups resulted from recent migration. These groups are frequently facing a number of complex challenges and barriers to integration and social inclusion. Some of these barriers are described in the following section.

Barriers to integration and social inclusion

Stereotypes and prejudices

Stereotypes are representations (“pictures in our heads”) that are associated with members of a specific group. They describe characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of various groups and are shared by most members of a society and integrated in cultural representations. Although some characteristics rely on “a kernel of truth”, stereotypes are abusive generalizations that simplify the way we describe and understand diversity in society. Some groups have predominantly positive stereotypes, while disadvantaged minorities usually are associated with very negative stereotypes. Stereotypes are automatically activated in our brain when we identify a person as belonging to a certain group. Because of the principle of cognitive economy which guides the functioning of human brain, the natural tendency is to take into account the stereotypes. However, in a specific interaction we can choose to rely on the stereotype or not.

Prejudices are attitudes directed toward people because they are members of a specific social group. It includes evaluations of the members of the group as well as emotions felt when thinking about or interacting with members of that group. Prejudices can also be positive or mixed but in the case of disadvantaged ethnic minorities they are usually very negative. Racism is a prejudice.

Racism

Racist prejudices are, without a doubt, some of the most illustrative examples of prejudices as well as some of the prejudices with the greatest negative social impact. Racism can manifest in several different ways. First of all, there is the traditional racism, translated into an explicit manifestation of negative attitudes and discriminating behaviours against people perceived as belonging to a different “race”. Explicit racists attribute to non-Europeans characteristics which make them seem inferior to the other groups in society. Moreover, they see these characteristics as fixed, immutable and specific to all the members of this group. These people believe in the genetic transmission of certain behavioural tendencies and are sceptical about the effectiveness of any educational, socio-economical or other types of measures directed at the improvement of the situation.

However, a great number of people manifest a hidden racism. This refers to a situation in which there is a discrepancy or even contradiction between discourse and behaviour. Thus, these people/institutions have a discourse in which they state that they treat everybody the same way, but the “objective criteria” applied put migrants at a systematic disadvantage. The motto of this category could be: “I make no difference between migrants and locals, they are all the same to me, but they all must comply with the rules and norms... [established by the majority]”.

The third type of racism manifestation is aversive racism, a much more subtle form, difficult to identify both in others and in one’s own behaviour and, implicitly, much more difficult to combat. This includes people who consider themselves tolerant, without racist tendencies and who can even

express opinions that reject and condemn racism. These people unconsciously and unintentionally commit acts of discrimination not so much by disadvantaging migrants but by favouring locals, involuntarily avoiding contact with migrants or by adopting attitudes towards migrants which place them in a position of inferiority. The motto which would correspond best to this manifestation is: “they (the migrants) are humans too”.

Discrimination

Legally, at the level of international legislation, racial discrimination is considered “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965).

There are three types of discrimination:

- a) Direct discrimination occurs when “someone is treated less favourably than another person if he/she could have been treated in a similar way”. Classic examples of direct discrimination are employment advertisements specifying “immigrants excluded”, or posters with similar texts in public places.
- b) In the case of indirect discrimination, “a provision, criterion or practice appears to be neutral, but actually puts certain people at a disadvantage [...] compared with other people”. The typical example of this form of discrimination is the introduction of expensive uniforms in certain schools, which makes children from poor environments seek other schools.
- c) Structural discrimination means the poor representation of certain categories of people in various fields. For instance, statistical data show a very low percentage of minorities in the judicial system.

A specific form of discrimination is when personal dignity is harmed by hate speech or harassment. The public expression of the wish to “send back home immigrants” represents such discrimination, as it creates an atmosphere of intimidation for this community (if this particular wish is also “justified” by saying that refugees represent a source of infection, then a hostile, degrading and humiliating atmosphere is also created).

The existence at the social level of tendencies to discriminate against members of a disadvantaged social group, leads to several types of consequences: social, connected to the perpetuation of unequal relationships among groups, economical and psychological. Measures such as non-discriminating legislation, legislation against discrimination and the existence of institutions with responsibilities in combating discrimination are important elements, but not nearly enough, in ensuring the reduction of discrimination.

Next we present a series of concepts which help us understand better how subjective our interpretation of reality is and what the effects of personal or social beliefs are on a group of people and implicitly on each person identified as belonging to that particular group.

The glass ceiling effect

The glass ceiling effect concept comes from the field of gender equality and refers to the barriers that keep minorities and women from climbing the professional ladder and obtaining high positions. These barriers are, in fact, an unjust system or a set of attitudes that are not directed to an individual, but to a whole group or category of persons, the migrants in our case. Although officially people having refugee status should enjoy equal employment opportunities, as, theoretically, the selection and promotion processes are based on people's own worth, the members of the disadvantaged groups face invisible barriers which limit their real possibilities of finding a better position, even if they make the same efforts as the other employees and possess similar competences. These barriers may seem invisible, like a glass ceiling, but they play an important role in maintaining the status-quo. Employers tend to hire people who are culturally similar to them and do not want to "risk" hiring minorities. This is also encouraged by the attitudes of certain people belonging to the majority population, who see the professional ascension of minorities as a direct threat to their own chances of advancement.

Confronted with these invisible barriers, with discrimination in all its forms, including indirect and structural discrimination, and with a lack of models, of examples of people similar to them who have successful professional careers in various fields, members of disadvantaged groups come to internalize the image that they are not capable enough for certain positions and to reject the classical model of success through career advancement, resigning themselves to the inferior position which they are convinced they cannot get out of.

The Golem effect

The Golem effect is a type of self-fulfilling prophecy which refers to the effect of low expectations placed upon a certain person. Thus, studies carried out in the field of education and organisational psychology show that low expectations increase the chances that the person in question will obtain poor results.

Employers can generate "a framework for failure" for certain categories of employees, often without even being aware of it. The great majority of stereotypes of refugees contain negative characteristics. Consequently, when an employer interacts with a refugee, instead of making the effort to find out which are that person's strengths and weaknesses, he/she is content to just form his/her opinion about that person based on the existing stereotypes. Once reality is filtered through those stereotypes, people see what they expect to see. The information is filtered so that those behaviours that do not correspond to the stereotype may be ignored and those which confirm the

stereotype may be given more importance, in order to ensure consistency with the initial belief, with the stereotype. Employers or bosses label their subordinates and these labels become self-fulfilling prophecies. Studies have shown that, in the case of the people considered to be competent, bosses attribute their success to internal factors and failure to external factors; in the case of the people considered less competent, they do the exact opposite. Thus, the objective results are interpreted in such a way as not to affect the initial label attached to the respective person.

The Golem effect can be avoided only if employers are willing to identify their own stereotypes about certain groups and refrain from basing their analyses on preconceived ideas about the members of a certain group.

Strategies to promote positive intercultural attitudes

False solutions: tokenism, individualisation, ignoring differences

Tokenism is the practice of involving a limited number of individuals from a group which is generally underrepresented, in order to appear inclusive, diverse and representative of the larger society and to deflect accusations of discrimination.

Here are three examples of tokenism:

- The parents committee of a school located in a neighbourhood with a high presence of members of a minority group consists exclusively of parents belonging to the majority. They decide to involve one minority parent in the committee, to prove that it reflects the diversity of the area.
- The youth centre of a neighbourhood where a lot of refugees are living, decides to involve two young refugees in their cultural activities to prove that they are inclusive.
- A reporter doing an inquiry about the quality of the public services in a neighbourhood with many inhabitants having a migrant background decides to ask also one migrant to show that the article reflects a diversity of voices.

In reality, in all three cases, having one or a few persons from the underrepresented groups does not really change the situation and it is rather a window-dressing measure. Moreover, in many cases, the persons from the underrepresented groups are selected in such a way as to not disturb the current power relations and to not challenge the status quo. Often, their voice actually does not matter or it is not really reflecting the perspective of the other members of their groups.

Another false strategy to address problematic intergroup relations is to deny the importance of group belonging and focus exclusively on the individuals, with the assumption that a fair situation can be achieved if “everybody is treated the same way” and that differences in cultural practices are kept for the private sphere. In many cases this is not effective because it only avoids addressing the real issues and it may also result in indirect discrimination or in reproducing inequalities and the power of dominant groups.

Solutions based on the contact hypothesis

Ignorance theory: getting to know each other beyond stereotypes

One approach to get members of social groups who are having negative perceptions and attitudes towards each other to overcome these perceptions and attitudes and to engage in positive relations starts from the idea that they need to know each other better.

This is based on the assumption that the negative perceptions and attitudes are due to a lack of knowledge or to wrong information that people have about the other group. Indeed, if there is little knowledge based on facts, it is more likely that those concerned will rely on stereotypes. The knowledge gap will be filled-in quickly with stereotypical elements provided by the immediate social environment or by the media. Also, populist statements made by the media or opinion leaders are easier accepted.

To counter this tendency, the approach based on ignorance theory recommends that members of the two groups are provided with information about the other group, verifiable data and facts which contradict or nuance the stereotypical image. The direct contact with counter-stereotypical individuals from the other group also can have a positive impact.

This approach can work and lead to an improvement of intergroup perceptions, attitudes and relationships but has also several limitations. Thus, it assumes that those concerned, on both sides, are open and really want to learn about the others and that they are also ready to engage in a critical reflection to process the information they receive and compare it with the stereotypes.

Intergroup contact

Another approach to improving intergroup perceptions and attitudes is based on creating direct interpersonal contact between members of the two groups. It assumes that the person-to-person relations will allow those involved to discover each other as human beings, with similarities and differences and generate positive perceptions and attitudes.

Research on this matter proved that simple contact is not enough to generate positive changes. On the contrary, sometimes direct contact can enhance opposition and reinforce the negative attitudes. In some cases people may have the tendency to select from what they perceive at the other only those elements which confirm the stereotypes and ignore unconsciously the elements that contradict the stereotype. Also, the goal is not achieved if those involved say about the person from the other group they encounter “she/he is ok, but she/he is not like the other members of their group”. In order for the intergroup contact to produce the expected outcomes in terms of improvements in perceptions and attitudes, and to have higher chances that these outcomes are generalised to all the members of the other group, a series of conditions need to be fulfilled:

- Equal status in the interaction. Ideally, members of both groups should have similar characteristics, for example, similar number of persons, age, level of education, skills, social status. If there are differences, for example in terms of social status, knowledge of the language, knowledge of local society, as it is the case for groups consisting of refugee and local young people, the interaction needs to be constructed in such a way as to ensure a balanced status and equal recognition of both groups.
- Cooperation for achieving common goals. Both groups must work to achieve a goal that can only be attained if the members of two groups cooperate by pooling their efforts and resources. The distribution of tasks has to be done in such a way as to avoid competition

(like in situations when one group does a part of the job and the other group does another independent sub-task. A situation of “positive interdependence” needs to be created.

- A supportive normative framework. The interaction has better outcomes if the idea of the improvement of attitudes and relationships between the two groups is encouraged and supported by recognised authorities, by public policies or by recognised leaders. If the overall society encourages friendly, helpful, egalitarian attitudes and condemns mutual blaming and rejection, it is more likely that the positive effects of the contact will appear.

Other elements that need to be taken into account are:

- The best effects are obtained if members of the two groups have various opportunities for informal direct interaction and have opportunities to share personal stories and feelings, not just to work together.
- The contact needs to be long enough to ensure that the anxiety generated by a new experience and by the interaction with new people is overcome. Activities making the members of the conflicting groups to feel comfortable with one another also help the effectiveness of the process.

There is also research proving that imagined positive contact can have similar effects with the direct contact. For example, young people from a class in a city where there are no refugees may be guided to reflect on how it would be if they met and interacted with young refugees.

Common ingroup identity model

According to the common ingroup identity model (developed by Gaertner and Dovidio since 2000), intergroup contact will be maximally effective at improving intergroup relations when group members re-categorize the intergroup situation by perceiving themselves as members of a more inclusive common, superordinate category. Thus, besides the cooperation for a common goal, members of the two groups are encouraged to see themselves as belonging together to the same group. In this way intergroup bias stemming from group distinctions would be reduced. However, this requires that group distinctions are overcome but not ignored. The effect of generalising positive attitudes towards all the members of the other group is higher when those involved perceive themselves and are perceived by the others as each belonging to their group and to a common group.

Interculturalism, democratic culture and inclusive societies

Interculturalism as acculturation orientation

Differences in the perception of the desirable relationship of migrants with their cultural background and with the cultural background of the host country are reflected by the concept of acculturation orientations. Acculturation is defined from this perspective as the process of bidirectional change that takes place within contrasting cultural groups whose members experience sustained intercultural contact and it is implied that both cultural groups are influenced and transformed by their mutual intercultural contacts (Berry & Sam, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006).

The Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) was designed to categorise relations between host community members and nondominant immigrant group members (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997). IAM provides instruments useful in identifying the acculturation orientations adopted by migrants within the country of settlement, as well as acculturation orientations adopted by host community members toward specific migrant groups. The IAM proposes that by virtue of their power advantage in the country of settlement, host majority members may endorse five acculturation orientations they wish immigrants to adopt: integrationism, assimilationism, segregationism, exclusionism, and individualism, defined as follows:

- Integrationists think that migrants should maintain certain aspects of their culture of origin while also adopting key features of the host community culture.
- Assimilationists expect migrants to relinquish their own culture of origin for the sake of adopting the culture of the mainstream host society.
- Segregationists accept that migrants maintain their culture of origin as long as they keep their distance from host majority members. Segregationists do not wish migrants to transform, dilute, or “contaminate” the majority host culture.
- Exclusionists deny migrants the right to adopt features of the host community culture while also denying migrants the choice to maintain their heritage culture. Exclusionists believe that some migrants have customs and values that can never be culturally or socially incorporated within the host majority mainstream.
- Individualists downplay group ascriptions and have a “live and let live” view of cultural diversity, as they are not too concerned about whether migrants maintain their heritage culture or adopt the dominant host majority culture. Individualists value personal qualities and achievements and tend to interact with migrants in the same way they would with other individuals who happen to be members of the host majority.

The acculturation orientations can be different in private domains (for example culture and personal relations) and in public domains (for example, education, employment, housing or place of residence).

Interculturalism as acculturation orientation means therefore the choice and the support for the choice of living simultaneously within two cultures and belonging to both the culture of origin and to the host culture.

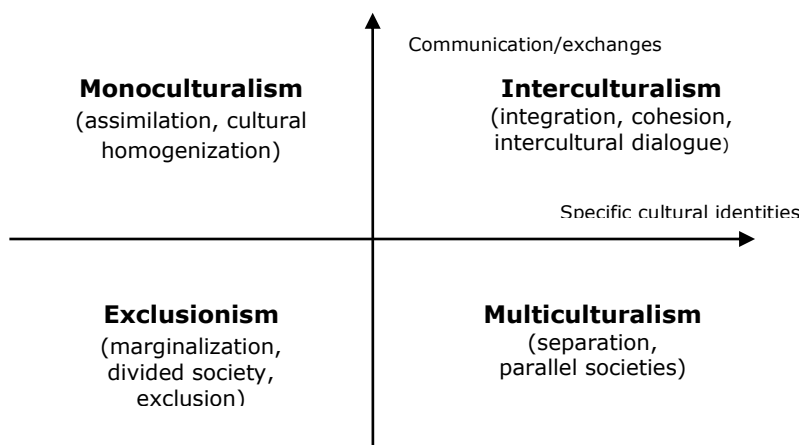
Interculturalism as a normative approach in public policies

When it comes to addressing issues related to cultural diversity, the terms “multicultural” and “intercultural”, as well as their derivatives, are often mentioned. Both can be used in a descriptive or in a normative way.

We can acknowledge that our societies are culturally diverse, that different cultural groups exist, that sometimes there are tendencies of increasing cultural diversity, and we describe society as “multicultural”. We can also use the term “intercultural” in a descriptive way, emphasising that, in nowadays societies, interactions between members of different cultural groups are frequent and even unavoidable, that contact with people having a different cultural background is part of our daily lives.

If we take a normative perspective, referring to a vision about society, to what we believe society should be like and what policies should be in place to address cultural diversity, the terms “multiculturalism” and “interculturalism” are more and more commonly used.

The model below proposes a way to distinguish between these concepts. It is a bi-dimensional model built around two key issues confronting groups living in culturally diverse societies: maintenance and development of specific cultural identities of each group and exchanges, interactions and cooperation between the groups within the wider society. It represents in fact a transfer to the normative level of the model used in the section explaining the concept of integration.



This model, despite a certain number of limitations, makes it clear that both multiculturalism and interculturalism oppose monoculturalism and policies aiming of assimilation, but also contradicts a common assumption which considers that increased interaction between cultural groups represents a threat to their cultural identity.

According to the interculturalist approach, it is possible and desirable that public policies support members of various groups in affirming publicly and in developing their cultural identities, while also providing a framework for members of different groups to interact, negotiate and cooperate in finding the best solutions to common interest issues, based on democratic principles. This allows for “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” but at the same time ensures the conditions, for people who wish so, to participate in the cultural life of their specific communities. We could call such a situation an “intercultural society”.

Transculturalism

Although there is no generally agreed definition and understanding of transculturalism, there are some common elements among the proponents of this concept. One element refers to the acknowledgment of new realities in present day society which can be described with the word “transcultural”. With globalisation, there are more and more individuals which do not identify with a specific cultural framework or have been used to changing various times their cultural framework of reference. This is related to the concept of cosmopolitanism and it may be associated with individualism as acculturation orientation. Moreover, it is common that promoters of transculturalism are also supporters of cultural relativism and of moral relativism (views that consider that there are no universal references to be taken into account).

Although the debate around transculturalism may increase in pertinence with the advancement of globalisation, with increased access to information and increased mobility of people, in the present context cultural affiliation is very important for the majority of humans. Even people who consider themselves as without cultural affiliation have their way of life, way of thinking and behaving, influenced by specific cultural references. Thus, in reality in many cases transculturalism is assimilationism in disguise.

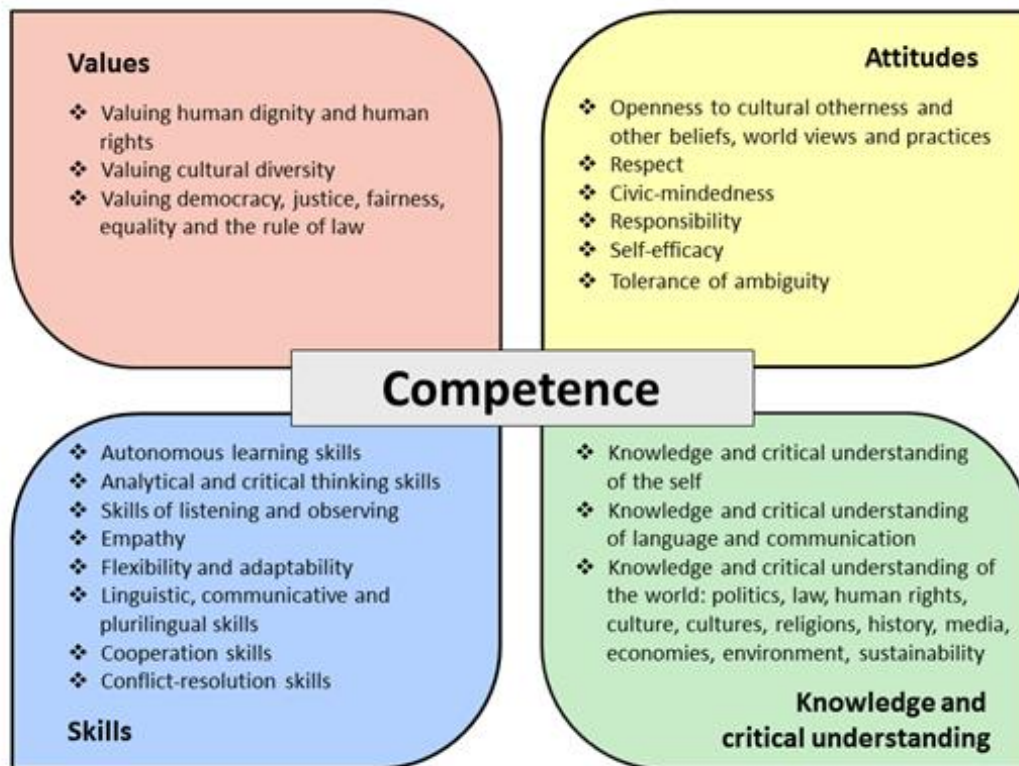
Competences for democratic culture

As mentioned above, interculturalism as a normative approach makes sense only if democratic principles are at the basis of the relationships between individuals with different cultural background and between different cultural groups.

In the final declaration adopted at the Conference of the Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe member states in April 2016, a new model of “competences for democratic culture” has been acknowledged as useful to guide educational policies and practices across Europe in relation to the mission of education to prepare young people for their role of citizens.

The term ‘culture of democracy’ rather than ‘democracy’ is used in this context to emphasise the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices. The model of competences for democratic culture also includes intercultural competence as being of central importance to democratic processes within culturally diverse societies. A fundamental principle of democracy is that the people who are affected by political decisions should be able to express their views when those decisions are being made and that decision-makers should pay attention to those views.

The model includes 20 elements, grouped in values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding, as illustrated in the diagram below:



Details about the competence model, the meaning of the various components and the other elements of the competence framework envisaged are available at www.coe.int/competence.

These elements should be taken as reference also in the definition of the learning outcomes of non-formal educational activities aiming at improving the mutual perceptions and attitudes between refugees and the local population.

Intercultural education

Intercultural versus monocultural education

There are two main ways of justifying the need for intercultural education:

- The first one, actually related to the origins of intercultural education in Europe, is instrumental: intercultural education is considered as necessary for addressing specific challenges related to the presence of cultural diversity in schools. Thus, cultural diversity, particularly the one generated by migration is seen as a problem, and intercultural education is seen as the solution which can fix it.
- The other main justification for intercultural education is based on principles and is related to the way the mission of education is understood.

The table below illustrates the perspective of intercultural education in contrast with the one of monocultural education.

Monocultural education	Intercultural education
Mission of the education system	
Generating citizens which are loyal to the country and nation (nation-state), ready to give their life for protecting it and for preserving it for the next generations	Generating active citizens prepared for a democratic culture and for life in a culturally diverse and dynamic society
Outcomes of education	
Pride of belonging to the nation, based on ethnocentric arguments, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are better than others or simply the best (at least at selected characteristics) - We have endured adversities and suffered but we will eventually prevail - We are discriminated, treated unfairly, they steal from us, or do not let us develop as we should The result is ethnocentrism, positive perception of in-group and negative perception of out-group	Competence for democratic culture, including democratic and intercultural values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. This means, among others, considering human dignity, human rights, equality and democracy as universal values, together with respect for cultural diversity.
Reflection in educational practices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conformism is valued - learning to pass over the national heritage history, literature, civic education (and sometimes religion) are instruments to build pride and justify a positive self-stereotype and negative hetero-stereotypes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - values refer to universal principles, not to national or cultural specificities - learning is done primarily for personal development - critical thinking and critical understanding are essential in all subjects, including history, literature, civic education and religion

Traps to avoid in intercultural education

There are various risks related to the misuse of intercultural education even by people with very good intentions. A first major risk is related to the (often implicit) use of culture in an essentialist perspective. To limit this risk, it is always preferable to speak about interactions between people who perceive themselves or are perceived as having a different cultural affiliation, not between cultures.

The table below compares some of the common misinterpretations of intercultural education with the desirable intercultural approach:

Intercultural education <u>does not mean</u> ...	Intercultural education <u>means</u> ...
celebrating diversity and presenting an idealised image of cultural diversity in society	raising the awareness of learners on both the benefits and challenges related to cultural diversity and in educational activities also the “hot” issues on the public agenda, as well as issues related to diversity that learners are confronted with in their daily life.
presenting only information about specific cultures, based on outstanding cultural products or on ethnographic descriptions of certain realities and cultural practices.	a balanced focus on values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding, with a view to developing competence for democratic culture, avoiding abusive generalisations, stereotypical judgements towards social groups perceived as different in religion and culture
focusing only on how to behave with people which are culturally different	situating intercultural communication skills in close connection with a better understanding of one’s own cultural background, knowledge of other cultures as well as with positive attitudes towards cultural diversity.
specific measures for migrants, refugees or minorities, allowing them to learn the official language(s) of the country where they live, their mother tongue, or to be taught about the culture and traditions of their community	Including an intercultural approach also in educational provisions for migrants and minorities and complementing them with learning opportunities favouring intercultural encounters and preventing segregation
organising folkloric performances where songs, dances and traditions of different cultural groups are presented.	going beyond the superficial display of stereotyped representations of cultures focused on the past, stimulating meaningful interaction between individuals and addressing real life issues.
promoting the idea that all cultural practices are acceptable and should be respected.	promoting a human rights – based approach, with the idea that various cultural practices should be understood and respected, as long as they are compatible with the universal principles of human rights and democracy and

	that practices that result in discrimination and persecution, for example based on gender, age, etc., are not acceptable in the name of cultural difference.
learning about the culture of students who belong to a “minority” in a class, emphasising the exotic differences between “their culture” and the “majority culture”.	addressing and involving all students, whether they belong to a “minority” group or not, regardless of the fact that members of a “minority” group are present or not in the class; making balanced references to cultural elements familiar to all students, pointing out both differences and similarities
a moralising discourse, telling students what attitudes they should have and how they should behave	creating learning situations that lead to critical reflection and the development of empathy, resulting in internal motivation for positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with different cultural backgrounds.
specific support measures targeting members of cultural groups affected by social disadvantages or support measures for children with special educational needs	focusing on the development of intercultural competence of all learners, adapting educational strategies to consider their specific background and needs; sometimes, additional support is needed to ensure effective educational achievement but this support is complementary, not part of intercultural education.
that all learners should be stimulated to “declare” their ethnic affiliation	creating a positive atmosphere in the learning group, making its members feel free and comfortable to affirm their cultural affiliation if they wish so, but avoiding any hetero-identification or labelling, while allowing for the possibility of multiple cultural affiliation

Inclusive education and intercultural education

Started as an approach aiming at eliminating the segregation of children with special educational needs, inclusive education evolved into a more general educational approach focused on making sure that each and every student feels welcome and that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued.

From an inclusive education perspective, diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultural background, different social background and family lives, different interests and ways of learning – are exposed to teaching strategies that reach them as individual learners. Inclusive education is based on the recognition of the fundamental rights of all children and aims at providing them with quality education and with the necessary support to develop their individual potential to the best.

Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging.

The goals and principles of inclusive education are compatible with those of intercultural education. However, in practice, this connection is not always made. Education should be inclusive and intercultural.

Methodological references for inclusive intercultural education

The goals and principles of inclusive and intercultural education are not compatible with a classical pedagogical approach, centred on a pre-defined content and structured around the transfer of knowledge from teacher to learners.

In order to allow not just for the acquisition of knowledge, but also for the development of values, attitudes, skills and critical understanding, interactive and experiential learning activities, based on a constructivist approach are essential.

The development of intercultural education activities in mixed groups of refugees and no-refugees should envisage:

- Building positive relations between participants
- Stimulating a positive attitude towards diversity
- Building self-esteem and a positive social identity
- Maintaining a balance between emphasising differences and similarities
- Showing examples where diversity brings practical benefits but not avoiding sensitive and controversial issues
- Emphasise linguistic diversity (make visible and use linguistic competences refugees have – in their mother tongue or other languages - without labelling them)

In order to contribute to building self-esteem and a positive social identity of young refugees, it is important to:

- Generate situations where refugees experience the feeling of success and appreciation
- Make sure that refugees recognise themselves and their family and community background in the common space (e.g. geographical references, names used in exercises, content of educational activities)
- Refer to positive role-models (e.g. refugees/migrants with positive achievements or civic attitude, public figures with refugee/migrant background)

Effective intercultural education activities also build on participants' skills and competences, encourage critical reflection and awareness of all participants on their own situation, emphasising also disadvantage and discrimination, as well as privilege. They should pay attention to creating a common space where everybody can feel comfortable and express openly but respectfully opinions and views, accepting that others might have different opinions and views.

Together with addressing issues and topics directly relevant for the daily life of participants and the cultural diversity and intercultural encounters they experience directly, effective intercultural education activities should also envisage global issues and promote global citizenship. Global citizenship refers to a sense of belonging to the global community and common humanity, with its members experiencing solidarity and collective identity among themselves and collective responsibility at the global level. An emerging approach, promoted currently by international organisations is global citizenship education, which is closely connected to intercultural education and education for democratic culture.

The following concrete methodological strategies are compatible with the requirements set above:

- Experiential learning
- Cooperative learning
- Complex instruction
- Project-based learning

They are briefly described and illustrated with examples in the guide for intercultural education.

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