Empowering Students through Intercultural Education: Educational Strategies for Migrant Integration

Strive Tanja[*]

Abstract

Integration has been defined as a process by which migrants become accepted in a society that places obligations on host societies to provide access to the labour market and different kinds of services including education. Schools are an important arena for integration as they are among the first places where newly arrived migrant children and families mix with local populations. Schools are important sites for learning local languages and cultural norms as well as forming relationships and new friendships. They also provide key contact points for other support services, and education itself increases the chances for participation in the labour market.

Introduction

In today's increasingly globalized world, migration has become a prominent phenomenon, shaping societies and cultures around the globe. The interaction between different cultures and the integration of migrant populations pose unique challenges, particularly in the field of education. Intercultural education offers a promising approach to foster inclusivity, understanding, and mutual respect among diverse communities. In this article, we explore the concept of intercultural education and present educational proposals aimed at promoting social integration and enhancing educational outcomes for migrant populations.

Faculty of Education, University of Murcia, 30003 Murcia, Spain; Email: tanjastrive@gmail.com

Globalization and migration are two phenomena that are having fundamental effects on both the developed and lesser developed societies, and also on individuals from all walks of life. This occurs at all levels, be they political, economic, social, or cultural. The picture of a compact society structured around a coherent system of values and shared social behavioral patterns has fallen apart, even in those populations which are far removed from the big cities. Today's hyper communicated society has pulled down the barriers and has opened up spaces of communication where before there was only isolation and monologue. Nothing will be the same in the future: customs and traditions, language and religion, and values and behaviours, in short, culture will be contrasted with other ways of life and other cultures which will claim their own spaces and areas of manifestation. Uniformity and homogeneity have given way to complexity, variety, and mixed race.

Understanding Intercultural Education

Intercultural education is an educational framework that recognizes and values cultural diversity, promoting the interaction and dialogue between different cultures within educational settings. Its primary goal is to create inclusive learning environments that respect and celebrate cultural differences, while also fostering intercultural understanding, cooperation, and social cohesion.

Educational Proposals for Intercultural Education and Migration

Intercultural Curricula: Developing inclusive and culturally responsive curricula is crucial in intercultural education. Curricula should reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of both local and migrant students, incorporating content that promotes cross-cultural understanding and respect. This can include integrating multicultural literature, historical perspectives, and contributions of various cultures into the curriculum, fostering empathy and appreciation for different ways of life.

Bilingual and Multilingual Education: Recognizing and supporting students' native languages is essential in intercultural education. Providing bilingual or multilingual education allows students to maintain and develop their mother tongue while also acquiring the language of the host country. This approach not only facilitates communication and academic progress but also preserves cultural identity and strengthens students' sense of belonging.

Intercultural Competence Development: Intercultural education should aim to develop students' intercultural competence, which involves acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective intercultural communication and collaboration. This can be achieved through interactive activities, such as cultural exchanges, collaborative projects, and simulations that encourage dialogue, empathy, and perspective-taking among students from different cultural backgrounds.

Teacher Training and Support: Educators play a crucial role in implementing intercultural education. Providing comprehensive training and support for teachers is essential to enhance their intercultural competencies and enable them to create inclusive learning environments. Professional development programs can focus on intercultural communication, understanding cultural diversity, and implementing effective instructional strategies that promote equity and inclusion.

Parent and Community Engagement: Involving parents and the wider community is vital for the success of intercultural education. Establishing partnerships and collaborative initiatives between schools, families, and community organizations can foster mutual understanding, trust, and support. Parent education programs, cultural events, and community outreach initiatives can further promote intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

Educational Proposals

It is a task to be shared by society as a whole. All we can do here is outline some proposals. (1) Integration of everybody in the classrooms and in society demands, above all, a change in attitudes. Attitudes, which are often at the root of rejection of different ethnic groups and cultures, are formed by messages and behaviours which are transmitted daily by the various media of communication, which are broadcast inside and outside the centres of education, and which filter through to every level and pervade every conversation. It is not just the images and the messages that are received through the media that make up the way young people think and act, there are also the role models of behaviour perceived in those most significant to them. The life models that are inevitably offered by the family and in the centres of learning can never be a matter of indifference for children and students. Social behaviours exhibited in public always produce certain effects and foster the acquisition of attitudes and values. It is here where action must be taken, where the messages of exclusion can be countered by unmasking that false defence of the home culture which harbours such messages. To expect the media to change its messages or society as a whole to assume a protector role towards the younger generations is an idealistic concept of society which has nothing to do with reality. Programmed activity both in the schools and in society to neutralize racist messages which exclude other cultures are required if hostile attitudes are to be changed, albeit over the long term. The change in attitudes of pupils could be done in the following way: promoting a moral atmosphere in the classroom and in the school, an attitude of acceptance in the teacher pupil relationship, cooperation between pupils, development of solidarity projects in the school, and teachers training in the education of attitudes and values.

Benefits of Intercultural Education for Migration

Social Integration: Intercultural education promotes social integration by fostering positive interactions, reducing prejudice, and creating a sense of belonging among diverse student populations.

Academic Achievement: By valuing students' cultural backgrounds and providing culturally responsive teaching, intercultural education enhances academic achievement and engagement, as students feel acknowledged and connected to their learning.

Cultural Awareness and Respect: Intercultural education develops students' cultural awareness, empathy, and respect for others, nurturing a harmonious and inclusive society.

Global Citizenship: Intercultural education equips students with the skills and attitudes necessary to become active and responsible global citizens, capable of engaging in an interconnected world with empathy and cultural competence.

Conclusion

Intercultural education presents a transformative approach to address the challenges posed by migration and cultural diversity in educational settings. By valuing cultural differences, fostering inclusivity, and promoting intercultural understanding, educational proposals rooted in intercultural education can create enriching learning environments that benefit all students, facilitate social integration, and contribute to the development of cohesive and harmonious societies. Embracing intercultural education is a crucial step towards a more inclusive and equitable educational system that prepares students to thrive in an interconnected world.

References

1. Alsancak F, ve Kutlu İ. (2020). Çifte Mağduriyetin Özneleri Olarak Engelli Mültecilere İlişkin Bir İnceleme. Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi. 15 (2): 590-598.

2. Arıkan, Ç. (2002). Sosyal Model Çerçevesinde Özürlülüğe Yaklaşım, Ufkun Ötesi Bilim Dergisi, Türkiye Körler Federasyonu Yayını. 2 (1): 11-25.

3. Babaoğlu, C. (2015). Türkiye'de Engelli Politikaları ve Sivil Toplum Örgütlerinin Kentsel Engelli Politikalarına Etkisi: Ankara Örneği, Doktora Tezi. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara.

4. Burcu, E. (2015). Engellilik Sosyolojisi. Anı: Ankara.

5. Buckup, S. (2009). *The price of Exclusion: The Economic Consequences of Excluding People with Disabilities from the World of Work. Employment Sector Working Paper No. 43*, ILO, Geneva.

6. CDC, (2022). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Developmental Disabilities.

7. Çakran, Ş. ve Eren, V. (2017). *Mülteci Politikası: Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye Karşılaştırması"*, Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi. 14 (39): 1-30.

8. Çondur, F.; Yenipazarlı, A. ve Cömertler, N. (2020). *Engelli İstihdamının Dünyada ve Türkiye'deki Görünümü*, Avrasya Sosyal ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi (ASEAD). 7 (5): 347-362.

9. Deniz, T. (2014). *Uluslar Arası Göç Sorunu Perspektifinde Türkiye*. Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi. 18:1.

10. DHS, (2022). U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Refugees and Asylees.*