EDUCATION FOR GLOBALIZATION: CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND MULTILINGUALISM

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Abstract

In the process known as globalization, cultures, languages and ways of living converge creating a different society, one in which multilingualism plays a main role, having its reflection in education. It is interesting, from this point of view, to define the real necessities of these multilingual and multicultural students, in order to adequate the curricula for a better acquisition of competences. However, one of the problems of educating in a multicultural society is that establishing priorities, sometimes, creates a feeling of lost, devaluation of a language and the culture it represents. Based on the premises previously considered, it is a main issue to take into account the richness of every single culture so as to change that feeling. Globalization needs to become an exchange of knowledge, and education is one of the tools for this purpose. Therefore, the aim of this brief study is to analyze the development of the concepts of multilingualism and cultural diversity, and how they interact with education, taking into consideration, both their benefits and also the difficulties derive from their implementation.

Keywords: Multilingualism, multiculturalism, globalization, education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a process that may affect different fields. Its influence in society can affect international, economic and personal relationships, both positively and negatively. It also plays an important role in education. The cultural diversity is becoming more frequent in the classroom. Students were not brought up within the same city, country, culture or belief. This is the reason why we must pay attention to the individual necessities, taking into account the cultural field and not only the capabilities and skills of the student.

Considering the aforementioned points, and the work of several authors, we provide a brief review of the terms under study and their interaction with education. In this work we shall see a general approach of the multilingualism and multiculturalism, and how these two terms converge in the classroom encouraging a globalized education.

2 GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is a difficult term to define since it is a process which involves several areas of the daily life. We can also find different dimensions of the same term, according to the approach of each author. Globalization is usually understood as a process that affects economy, politics and culture [1], however, its influence on education is paid little attention. If we look up the term globalization in the Oxford Dictionary, it is defined as a process in which international organizations close ties, building capacity to operate globally [2]. Therefore, we can say that this is a full-scale fact.

In some cases, a certain influence can be originated by globalization on two general levels: integration, and segregation [1]. In other cases, it is considered that the bases of globalization are information and innovation [2], due to the way in which knowledge flows and grows.

On the one hand, cultural and physical barriers between countries are eliminated, facilitating the free movement of individuals; on the other hand, poorer regions suffer disadvantages [1]. The competitiveness between countries in terms of growth and development encourages the evolution of society and its institutions [1], creating standards to follow, and new behavior patterns for the individuals. Therefore, many authors define globalization as a widespread change. At the same time,
some experts also underline the influence of international relations in the loss of country or region identity [4].

The previously mentioned inequality brings about new forms for the globalization to be treated as a shift towards equality [5], eliminating the term segregation of the equation [1]. Therefore, the need to see the importance of the individual would be supported and the claim for a government capable of managing an inclusive change. At the same time, it would be possible to achieve a balance between the different areas of change, in order to enhance the qualities of a country [5].

There is an issue which could be clarified when referring to the term globalization, and this is the period of time involved. Even though it is understood as a change that is still in process, its origin is not clearly defined, although there are several approaches. In this case, the opinions of the consulted authors are really mixed. Some authors place its beginning in the mid-seventies, coinciding with the end of the Cold War [6]. If we consider the previous period, two historically relevant facts would take place on the same dates: the truce between The United States of America and the Soviet Union, and the termination of Social Contract, which began in England and spread to other industrialized areas [6].

Others speak about globalization not as we understand it nowadays, but as global processes developed long before; there have always been commercial relationships between people first, and between countries later. For example, the Silk Road, and the international trade system that took place before the World War I [7]. Although the development of skills was not the same, the basis for further development of trade routes and current international relations were established.

What happens with the definition of the word globalization also occurs with its inception and its space-time delimitation. The discovery of America in 1492 is also said to be a possible precursor to the development of the current international relations [8]. If we set its beginning from an economic point of view, some authors agree that it certainly started in the nineteenth century [8].

Nowadays globalization is understood as a development slowed down by the economic crisis of 2008. The relations which had remained so far between the Northern and Southern countries have been mutilated by the political and social situation of both worlds. The slow economic growth and the existing tensions are not eased by the welfare of a society that suffers the consequences of a possible bad management [9]. New technologies have also been referred to as part of this process.

As may be seen, the definition of globalization can be quite large, as well as the period of time covered by its development. According to the historical moment which is being valued, we may see different aspects of the same cultural, economic and territorial development process. The type of analysis should also be taken into account, since the terms of analysis will determine the different aspects, both in relation to its definition and to the moment of emergence.

3 MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is understood as the presence, respect and desire for the preservation of the cultural diversity in a particular territory, as we find it in the Oxford Dictionary [10]. It should also be noted that there are much more extensive and detailed definitions. It is also defined as the appropriate way to address the differences between individuals and not as an external factor in society [11].

Related to immigration [11], the individual differences of every inhabitant should be taken into account, no matter what their origin may be [11], since multiculturalism is understood in terms of cultural diversity. In some cases, this concept also implies an attempt to eliminate racism from a society [11] in which a part is seen as an aggressor and the other part as the victim. Therefore, the difference between individuals is noticeable again, turning multiculturalism into an excuse to hang on to a narrow way of thinking [11].

Some authors have used different terms to define society before understanding multiculturalism. For example plural societies, explaining that every society is plural and that it is really difficult to find a region free from external influence. The colonization of several territories and the migration of citizens from one country to another are some of the causes that explain the previously mentioned plurality in society [12].

There is also the possibility that this diversity may disappear due to the influence some cultures exert upon others, thus creating a new society. In this case, the previously mentioned figures emerge again: a strong society, which assumes the dominant role, and a weak society, which has no alternative but
to submit to its position because they do not have enough power or representation in official bodies to defend themselves against those issues [12].

However, *multiculturalism* would try to integrate all the cultural, ideological, religious, linguistic, economic and moral wealth, as other authors have explained, to create a new model of society in which there would be place for all citizens regardless their origin and beliefs [12].

In an attempt to clarify the nature of *multiculturalism*, we can find a multiple definition in which, according to Heckmann, there are different ways of understanding this factor due to its complexity and giving the same meaning to both *multiculturalism* and *multicultural society* [13].

Like many other authors, Heckmann defines *multiculturalism* mainly in terms of a process of evolution and change to a new society; therefore it is *changing the ethnic composition of the population* [13]. So the previous society was changing into a new hybrid society. It is considered that there are no longer virgin societies, so that the *concept of culture* is changed [13].

Then, he explains that this process should be understood in a *normative-cognitive* way because of the inevitability of *migration* and therefore, because of the influence produced by this fact [13]. At the same time, *multiculturalism* is also defined as an *attitude* towards the change, derived from the clash of cultures [13].

Finally, it is defined as a *political-constitutional principle* in which homogenization, and therefore loss, has no place [13]. Previously we have spoken about dominant and dominated societies, where the weakest one lost its identity. *Globalization* plays an important role in this absence, so it is classified as a *critical category* because the need to facilitate relations amongst cultures also involves a loss of identity [13].

Some regions have tried to establish *multiculturalism* through various projects nationwide, and despite the difficulties, they have achieved acceptable results. These areas had to deal with different factors which sometimes facilitated the task, and some other times entailed certain problems. The issues arising from the implementation of *multiculturalism* may be caused not only by cultural factors, but also by economic factors [14].

Kimlicka classifies these difficulties into five groups [14]. These groups clearly include the concerns raised when we talk about immigration, security, economy and international relations [14]:

- **Border control** is one of the most problematic issues; it is difficult to manage without violating the human rights of people who need to enter a country and, on the other hand, to maintain security and calm in the nation.
- **Desecurization of ethnic relations**; international relations are not always fluid, due to various factors, such as the external threat. In other words, we would be talking about terrorism, especially after the attack on the *World Trade Center*.
- **Human rights**, not all cultures share opinion or legal guidelines on measures to deal with a conflict, the perception radically changes from one society to another, either for moral or religious convictions.
- **Religious beliefs**, with a considerable influence in the regulations of the country.
- **Mixture of cultures** within the same geographical area.

Taking into account the previous information, we could say that *multiculturalism* is a complex term. Some authors consider it obsolete, because it creates a *global society* focused in the idea of a unified society, culture and language to facilitate international relations. On the other side, it is understood as a present threat because of the facts related to terrorism and insecurity. Anyway, it is a term that deserves attention, although it is true that we are walking towards a *globalized society*, we cannot ignore the variety of cultures currently living together within the same territory.

4 **MULTILINGUALISM**

Speaking of *globalization* and *multiculturalism*, it is essential to take a few paragraphs to explain *multilingualism*. Although it was not explicitly mentioned above, this concept is inseparable from both terms, *globalization* and *multiculturalism*. 
In some cases, it is defined as the ability to communicate in different languages, either oral or written level. Even knowing its positive effects at a cognitive and personal level, there are countries where it is still perceived as something out of the norm, like in the United States [15].

The perception of multilingualism has changed a lot in the last decades, as well as the perception of bilingualism and monolingualism. Monolingualism, which is defined as the ability to understand and communicate in just one language [16] presents a limitation nowadays; however, a few decades ago, the fact that a child would learn only one language was considered as something positive, since the number of words that he could acquire was higher and he had the advantage of not suffering interference when speaking [15].

This statement has now become obsolete, since the benefits of mastering several languages have been scientifically proved. The information received from the outside does not always come in word form that could be orally expressed, like the sounds of everyday objects or the sensations we can perceive through the skin, etc.; they nourish the cognitive and assimilation capacity of human beings [15].

In a world where there are more than 6,000 languages, the importance of monolingualism over multilingualism is at least questionable, although officially speaking, governments usually recognize only one language [15]. When we talk about multilingualism, it is assumed that one of those languages that a person would be able to speak is the English language, as a result of the influence of the colonization by the British and the dominant role which is currently played by the United States [17].

We can distinguish five major factors that lead to multilingualism and all of them are related to globalization [17]:

- **Imperialism** and colonialism are used as references because they led to the convergence of two different languages in the same territory.
- **Migration** is another factor to consider; poor regions are depopulated in search of a better life; thus promoting the need for communication between countries.
- The **preservation** of minority languages is also mentioned, the coexistence of two languages promotes their conservation in a cultural and social context in which both are necessary.
- The promotion of the **inclusion** of more than one language in the school curriculum because it favors their learning and use.
- **Religious migration**, in which people from different religious beliefs interact.

It should also be mentioned that the influence of the media, music and television programs produced in a foreign country promotes the interest in that language in one way or another. Some authors claim that multilingualism has become essential in modern society and also qualify it as inevitable [18]. Thanks to these new means of learning, the interest in learning a new language is clearly emphasized [18].

There is a dichotomy between prestige and necessity when learning a foreign language, prestige for the credibility and capacity of a person who is able to speak and necessity to adapt to the international market. There is also an increasing number of students who decide to try their luck in a foreign country after completing their studies [18]. In such cases, they fear the loss of identity against the learning of a new culture and adaptation to it [18].

Some authors make reference to a factor that was not mentioned before, the adaptation of the different languages that the individual knows to the different contexts of everyday life. This fact makes the study of multilingualism even more complex [19]. It should be noted that multilingualism is not a new term, since international relations have always existed, such as the aforementioned Silk Road, and consequently the exchange and use of several languages have always been there [19].

Different authors agree that the recent globalization process, along with the increased use of new technologies and other factors that facilitate the flow of information, have fostered the development of multilingualism in an extensive way in the twentieth century [19].

Given the previous information, we talk about multilingualism in terms of mastery of more than two languages, which promotes agility when developing multiple skills and also when communicating on a large scale. On the one hand, multilingualism enriches those who learn new languages and, on the other hand, it may lead to a loss of individual identity. Authors agree on their vision of multilingualism, although their definition would be based on their own information sources and purpose of their study.
5 MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM IN EDUCATION

Multilingualism and multiculturalism play a major role in education. At present, society is multicultural, so multiculturalism can be reflected in the classroom. The ever-increasing need to learn a foreign language leads more and more students to learn a third language and not only one [19].

The difference between learning a second language (L2) and a third one (L3) should be emphasized, as the cognitive processes which are involved in the acquisition of both languages are different, and the ability developed in L1 and L2 will influence the acquisition of L3 in a relevant way [19].

Multilingual education is developed in different ways in schools, depending on the area in which learning takes place. In some areas, the learning of L2 and L3 is a widely accepted fact, either because students learn two foreign languages or because the country’s official language and the region’s one complement each other within the same geographical area [19]. An example of this would be Catalonia, an Autonomous Community in which Spanish and Catalan coexist together with the learning of English, French and German.

When choosing a new language to learn, the relevance of the language to be studied and the need of the individual to learn one language or another have to be taken into account. Of course, English language learning plays an important role when developing multilingualism, since it is known as the modern language par excellence [19].

During the learning process, the individual will have some difficulties when acquiring the L3, due to the influence that the L1 and L2 will have over the new concepts from the L3. The problems that the pupil may experience are the following [19]:

- Interruption of L1 development.
- Interruption of L2 learning.
- Slowing down of L3 acquisition.
- Interference from L1 to L2.
- Interference from L2 to L3.
- Interference from L1 to L3.

One factor that was not mentioned before is the age factor. The general belief that a child can acquire a language more quickly and with more fluency is corroborated by different studies. An example of this would be immigrant families in which the youngest children find it easier to learn the language of the host country [19].

The age barrier is not always taken into account as certain educational systems do not introduce the learning of a third language, or even a second one during the first educational stages of the student. The introduction to new languages will take place halfway through primary education or even in the first years of secondary education [19].

Different authors agree that the learning process of a second language is different from the acquisition of a third one; this is due to the influences some will have over others as explained above. On the other hand, we have to take into account that the context in which learning is developed is also very important and it can also cause a positive and negative influence [19].

An important part in the acquisition process will be the opportunity of the student to be in contact with the language of study. The more exposed he will be to a social multilingual context, the more quickly he will be able to acquire the necessary competences for good linguistic development [19].

Aside from the complexity of language learning, the differences between a monolingual individual and a multilingual individual must be taken into account and also the way in which both process input, not only at a learning level but also at a social level [20]. In the previous sections, we made reference to the advantages a person could have if he speaks two or more languages in terms of cognitive development [15] [20]. The monolingual individual will process received information from a unique point of view so if any change occurs, it would be more persistent, whereas a multilingual individual perceives changes in a more natural way as the brain is more receptive to any variation [20].

In the educational process, and therefore in the learning of a language, the teacher is involved. He is the one who will influence the pupil, since it is the teacher in the first years of school, the figure who provides the students with the necessary information for his correct development and manages the information that the students receive in a natural way [20].
Such an important task requires a teacher involved in the existing diversity within the classroom, capable of managing the conflicts that may arise, both at a personal and cognitive level from diversity [20]. Therefore, it is emphasized the relevance of the teachers’ specific training in these terms.

In some cases, multiculturalism and diversity are used interchangeably, but it should be noted that they may have different meanings in the educational context and for this reason it is necessary to clarify its meaning. Whereas the term diversity refers to the existing variety of identities [21], multiculturalism is much wider, covering a way of life along with the existing diversity [21].

Taking into account the previous difference, the teacher should not only accept the diversity in the classroom but also encourage learning on the basis of existing individual and shared experiences within the educational context [21] [22]. There are many definitions of multiculturalism in the educational context, however, some authors set out the basis of multiculturalism on six points [22]:

- Firstly, they defend equality among students to develop all their potential in the area in which each student stands out.
- Secondly, education will be encouraged within the context of a changing and multicultural society.
- Thirdly, the teachers’ preparation for education in multiculturalism shall be measured independently of the origin of the teacher or the pupils.
- Fourthly, education shall focus upon the pupils’ development and not only upon learning concepts.
- Fifthly, educational centers will reformulate their principles in order to be adapted to the multicultural society.
- Finally, educators should take part in the preparation and adaptation of material used in the classroom.

Taking into account the mentioned premises, a change will be produced on three levels: personal, school and social level [22] [23]. Respect and integration of the different cultures co-existing in a specific geographical area will be encouraged, along with the characteristics of every region which will empower citizens [23]. This factor will develop what some authors [23] call multicultural citizenship, a way of teaching in which the individual grows free from external pressures, developing his abilities to the maximum extent possible, apart from his own knowledge belonging to a specific social ethnicity [22] [23].

The complexity of the topic here studied becomes apparent through the analysis of the various texts consulted. The terms multilingualism and multiculturalism are involved in education in the same way as they are in personal relationships within society. For this reason, many of the authors consulted advocate for a change in the educational system in which not only the diversity of each individual shall be recognized, but also the integration of such diversity will be encouraged, so that each student could develop his abilities apart from his origin or beliefs. As we have seen reflected in this brief study, it is produced a standardization in the acceptance of diversity and therefore part of the identity of each person is lost.

6 EDUCATION IN GLOBALIZATION

In the same way in which there is no established rule to see the influence of globalization in economic, political and cultural areas, with reference to education, the lines are not clear. Globalization gives educational processes the opportunity to evolve in a positive and negative way at the same time [1]. Some of the consequences derived from such transformation can be easily identified in the daily development of the teaching and learning tasks carried out within the classroom. Students, teachers and educational institutions are subject to both internal and external evaluation at a level that was not required until now [1].

Globalization within the school environment is a vaguely-studied topic as its influence is not defined, due to the complexity of the term. UNESCO [2] questions the input that students receive in the classroom, in the same way as the results obtained from the teaching and learning process. According to the same study, UNESCO [2] poses the influence of globalization in teaching from five different points of view [2]:
The pressure derived from the *globalization* process at work level; an individual's versatility is more and more valued, creating an environment that is not always sufficient for carrying out certain tasks.

The education system may vary, adapting itself to later work requirements and this fact will also provoke a necessity for the different national authorities to modify the education system within the statutes.

The aforementioned changes will promote equality in access to learning, with the objective of equaling different educational systems.

New technologies are used as a means of teaching, due to the easy access they provide to information.

The cultural concept will completely change through new methods.

The establishment of standards to follow at a global level is a very important factor in the evaluation of education. Different countries try to adapt their educational program so that it will be the most similar possible to that of those countries considered to be world power [23]. On the other hand, in an increasingly less homogeneous society, borders tend to be eliminated in terms of education and work opportunities. The individual attempts to prepare himself for life in society, becoming an object for this society through knowledge [23]. *Globalization* is said to promote change in education through the need to match educational processes among countries.

The technological advances that allow the conjunction of information also play an important part in the way data is processed all over the world [24]. In education, this fact allows the growth of information to be processed and therefore promotes each individual’s ability to manage all of the input he receives. Education should therefore adapt itself to this new era of communication in which students, teachers and teaching methods are modified in favor of evolution [24]. Students, who are increasingly more autonomous, need a guide to process the knowledge they acquire; in this case the teacher adopts a role that has up to now been rare, becoming an adviser [24].

Throughout this study, both enrichment and loss have been discussed, and education is not excluded from this. Educational models in developed societies serve as an example for consideration by developing countries. These educational models should be adapted to the society of each country maintaining its identity above any generalization and standard [23] [24].

*Globalization* in education has been presented as a new teaching model in which students prepare themselves for a life in a global society. The aim is to unify knowledge without giving importance to people’s origins or beliefs. The easy handling of new technologies promotes agility when exchanging information on a global scale and the speed of the new tools facilitates the process. The demand for a homogeneous education promoting the versatility of the individual means a gain in knowledge and at the same time, an unavoidable loss of identity.

### 7 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, it has been difficult to cover all opinions about the topics discussed. The complexity and breadth of each of them added to the approach of each author, do not allow the development of a homogeneous work, and this is precisely how the wealth of the words *globalization*, *multilingualism* and *multiculturalism* work.

On the one hand, we proceeded to make an approach to the value of these terms separately, to try to dissect their meaning and to be as close as possible to a clear and comprehensive definition. Although in some cases it was not possible to draw a specific line of research, some of its aspects have been analyzed in a brief and synthetic way.

On the other hand, we have made an approach to the relationship between these terms and education, analyzing how the negative and positive aspects of each one may be seen in the classroom. Throughout this study, we can see the prevalence of the sense of loss that some groups in society may suffer, either at a linguistic or cultural level, due to the necessity to adapt the skills to the increasingly globalized society. In contrast, we could find *multiculturalism* values, which defend the own individual identity against the proposed standards.
Thus, talking about globalization, multilingualism, multiculturalism and the influence they have on education, we can say that society tends to follow role models more and more homogenous and such models do not have the same function in every society due to their heterogeneity.

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