

## **CROSS-CULTURAL COUNSELING IN MULTICULTURAL SPANISH CONTEXT**

Dra. Elvira Repetto Talavera,  
D. Mario Pena Garrido  
*UNED, Facultad de Educación*

### **Resumen**

El presente artículo lleva a cabo una valoración de las aportaciones de las investigaciones sobre la orientación intercultural ante el fenómeno de la inmigración en Europa y particularmente en España. Para ello se ofrece una síntesis integrada de las contribuciones más relevantes que desde el punto de vista teórico y práctico proporciona esta parcela del saber. La construcción de un nuevo marco europeo multicultural, abierto al crecimiento en los últimos años de los movimientos migratorios así como las respuestas insolidarias, racistas, e intolerantes de algunos colectivos, son factores que nos obligan a implicarnos en el reto que supone el pluralismo cultural y las respuestas educativas correspondientes concluyendo que esta sociedad plural necesita no sólo medidas sociales y políticas que faciliten la participación democrática y activa, sino también respuestas educativas más tolerantes y comprensivas hacia las diferentes razas y culturas.

**Descriptor:** Orientación Intercultural, Multiculturalidad, Tolerancia, Comprensión, Derechos Humanos

### **Abstract**

This article carries out an assessment of the contribution provided by research into intercultural counseling in the face of the immigration phenomenon in Europe with special attention paid to Spain. To do so, we offer an integrated summary of the most relevant contributions, from a theoretical and practical point of view, that this field of knowledge provides. The construction of a new multicultural European framework open to the growth of migratory forces over the last few years, as well as intolerant, racist and unsupportive responses all oblige us to face up to the challenge of what cultural pluralism means and the corresponding educational responses, concluding that This plural society needs not only social and political measures which allow active and democratic participation but also educational solutions more tolerant and comprehensive towards different races and cultures.

**Key Words:** Multiculturalism, Counselling, Human Rights.

**Recibido:** 15/09/2006 **Aceptado:** 10/11/2006

## Introduction

The construction of a new European multicultural setting, open to growth in migratory movements experienced over the last few years, as well as unsupportive, racist and intolerant responses by some groups, are all factors which compel us to rise to the challenge which cultural pluralism and education for peace mean.

The challenge we are facing is to attain the advantages of cultural “globalisation” while at the same time conserving cultural identity. The contact between very different groups and ethnicities forces us to recognise the existence of a wide range of different approaches and therefore to develop communicative, democratic educational institutions focused on the development of coexistence, peace and the promotion of each and every one of the students and their cultural approaches.

However, this plural society needs not only social and political measures which allow active and democratic participation but also educational solutions more tolerant and comprehensive towards different races and cultures.

In this presentation session, firstly, a synthesis will be presented of the subject of *emigration and interculturality* will be broached with a few comments on the situation in Europe, followed by a synthesis of *the multicultural Spanish context*; in chapters three and four a brief review of *the intercultural approach in counselling* and the characteristics of *intercultural interventions in Spain* will be made. Lastly some final thoughts will be presented.

## Emigration and interculturality

Recent studies have revealed the need to rethink our concepts of interculturalism, especially in the field of education. What we have, until now, accepted as guidelines on multicultural practice in countries such as U.S.A., France or Germany, has been questioned by the previously mentioned studies, due to the fact that we have fallen back on the concept of interculturalism for aspects which have nothing to do with interculturality. I would like to highlight the magnitude of the phenomenon the educational institutions are experiencing; Referring to only the European Union, the approximately 30 million immigrants who exist in the Europe, mean that approximately 10% of children at compulsory school age are immigrant children and teenagers.

In accordance with García Garrido (2004), both the European Union and most European countries have drawn up various action plans with respect to migratory flows, plans that have not stopped the said flows from increasing considerably, which consequently means that half of the 30 million immigrants are in an illegal situation. This leads to many children not attending school due to the fact that the law is unaware of their existence. The conviction is currently held that this flow has occurred despite the legal measures to counterbalance the opening of borders. In addition to all this we have to add the fall in population suffered by all European countries without exception, which heralds a larger and larger participation of foreign workers.

The problem is compounded because in addition to migration dictated by employment we have to add the migration which comes from unemployment. There exist populations who have increased their nomadic range due to the fact they no longer limit themselves exclusively to their own countries, as they used to, but have started migrating to other neighbouring countries. This is true for Romanians, Sub-Saharan or Gypsies who have settled in countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal or Greece. All these populations present additional serious problems like the

rejection of schooling and the subsequent hindrance of the use of this procedure for social adaptation.

According to Touriñán (2004) there exist four ideas which have modified the context of work and thought with respect to interculturality as a fact and interculturalism as a proposal:

- The idea of a Third Sector which, together with the state and the market, contributes to controlling the destiny of the world, at civil society levels, as a form of organisation (Sálamon, 2001).
- The idea of a Third environment which together with a rural life and an urban life provides for new possibilities through a digital society. (Echevarría, 1999)
- The idea of Globalisation which, after 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 with the attack on New York's Twin Towers and the attack on Madrid's Atocha railway station on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in London, has begun to modify the feeling of transnationality, because public safety, international terrorism and judicial uncertainty have reached new levels and new forms and consequences for life on this planet (Castells, Giddens y Touraine, 2002).

The idea of a third or fourth way which, presented as a proposal for a knowledgeable society and respect for sustained development, advocates facing globalisation with the triple objective of economic well-being, social cohesion and political freedom (Giddens, 1999; Dahrendorf, 1995; Druker, 1993; Colom, 2000).

According to Lee and García Pastor (2003) the common use of expressions such as "coloured people" and "cultural diversity" means that some groups of people do not present cultural deficits.

The role that education must play in this whole context must take into account the two mentioned opposing poles: on the one hand, the socialisation of an individual through the reception of prevailing values in his society; and on the other, the autonomy of said subject so that he is able to distance himself from cultural conditioning.

Also worthy of mention is Garcia Ramos's (2004) contribution to the social situation created by the arrival of immigrants; said migratory phenomenon should mean a change in the lifestyle of the receiving country, as regards its values, its forms of relationships and its culture; this not only means that the subjects newly arrived to the language and customs which prevail in that moment must adapt but the aborigines themselves must also understand and accept that the society they grew up in no longer exists but has become a new society. If this change does not take place, cultures settled in the country are more than likely to play a dominant role over the others who later put in an appearance.

Everything which has been mentioned leads to the understanding of the important roles which education, the media and political powers play when trying to get those who receive immigrants to grow in flexibility, tolerance and understanding toward them. In our case we are only going to discuss the role education plays in the face of the migratory phenomenon. With that in mind, in the following section we summarise the features that educational centres which accept immigrants must have.

### **Multicultural Spanish Context**

Gelpi (1992) states that the modern-day permanent meeting of cultures is not an isolated situation which means that education systems must become multicultural. In fact, in the field of education, a large increase has been noted in racist and xenophobic behaviour towards people from different social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds by a large percentage (Sales y García, 1995) of individuals in education (which translates into rejection of classmates from other cultures and into problems of interaction); this requires the drawing up and application of educational procedures aimed at instilling intercultural attitudes and values which contribute to education for peace (Espejo, 1996).

It can be deduced from what has been stated above that the art of tolerance based upon a profound respect for the diversity of others whether that be cultural or ideological, allows us to coexist in peace. All education of a multicultural nature must generate dialogue, meeting points and coexistence as well as advocating the eradication of intolerant attitudes and behaviour, characterised by excluding people because of their race or language (Ortega, 1996), and therefore it has to create procedures aimed at establishing a culture of peace.

In Spain, the number of foreign pupils in 2005-2006 is 529.461, 80.000 more than the last year and 400.000 pupils more than ten years ago.

In 2005-2006 the foreign pupils represent the 6,5% of all of them, although there are differences in the regions: Firstly, la Rioja (112,5 pupils for one thousand registered), Illes Balears (100,1), Murcia (97,2), Navarra (88) and Madrid (87,7); this confirms the trayectory of 2004-2005: Illes Balears (11,1%), Madrid (10,7%) y La Rioja (9,6%).

Also there are differences in the publics and privates centres: the number of foreign pupils in publics centers is 80,6 for one thousand registered, and 32,5 in private centers.

The nacionality of origin of the pupils is, firstly, South America, with 230.381 pupils (Ecuador and Colombia), secondly, Europe with 144.508 pupils (Romania) and afterwards, Africa with 103.112 pupils (Morocco).

To make all the above mentioned possible, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (2004) has established that our educational communities must incorporate the following objectives into our curricula:

- Discover, feel and trust personal capacities and the social situation which we have to live in, to overcome our own limitations and difficulties which can contribute to a positive, optimistic development of life.
- Recognise and value aggressiveness itself as a form of self assertion and permanent control, able to be placed at the service of improvement and altruistic activities which favour the common good.
- Develop fondness, tenderness and sensitivity towards those who favour the universal meeting with others, valuing the particular differences (sex, age, race or religion) as enriching elements of this meeting.
- Recognise and face up to situations of conflict from a calm reflective standpoint, making negotiated decisions to solve them tolerantly and non-violently.

- Act in social and cultural diversity with an open spirit, respecting and recognising the wealth that diversity holds as a positive element which faces us with a permanent personal and social improvement of our harmonious coexistence.
- Participate in activities of self assertion, development and solidarity with other cultures, working together with institutional organisms and other organisations that promote relations of dialogue, aid, and harmony.
- Know and promote internationally recognised human rights, favouring a critical, supportive attitude, committed in the face of attitudes which infringe on them, facilitating everyday situations which help to make people aware of them all.
- Value pacific coexistence with others and among peoples as an asset of humanity which favours progress, wellbeing, and understanding, rejecting the use of force, violence, and imposition on the weak, promoting mechanisms of dialogue, agreement and fair and free negotiation.

As regards the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, to prevent violence and intolerance educationally the contents of the transversal curriculum, permeates the rest of the contents of educational subjects, steering them towards universal ethical values, in this case, specifically towards attitudes and practices of tolerance, democratic coexistence, respect for diversity, dialogue and solidarity. Teacher and Resource centres organise training courses for teachers on educational strategies to prevent xenophobia.

In the same way the Ministry has distributed a package of pedagogical materials comprising four books and two videos titled “Educational Program for Tolerance and the Prevention of Violence in Young people” to all secondary schools in their territorial management area, aimed at providing teachers and the education community with education strategies on tolerance and prevention of xenophobic violence, providing, additionally, didactic material on this matter for students. The Ministry is currently training teachers so that the material is used efficiently.

Likewise, the Community of Madrid’s Education Council is promoting a coexistence development program in its education centres named “Convivir es Vivir” (Coexisting is living). The program, to prevent and to stop attitudes of intolerance, susceptible to leading to violence, represents an educational intervention model which co-ordinates 26 primary and secondary education centres. The European Commission has welcomed the “Convivir es vivir” program as a pilot scheme which will lead the training of teachers to develop similar projects in education centres in Belgium, Scotland, France, Italy and Sweden, and as such, the program has been financed by the Commission.

Lastly, Spain, together with the rest of the countries of the European Union, is part of the “Group of Experts on Violence in Schools”, under the direction of the DGXXII of the European Commission whose objective is to draw up a report on the problem and the appropriate prevention policies. This “Group of Experts” has its own budget to help projects and initiatives for coexistence development in education centres throughout the European Union with Spain heading the list of countries who have presented projects for financing.

### **The intercultural approach in counselling**

During the 80’s and 90’s multicultural counselling developed enormously due to both investigation and to its practical application. Today, the theories, techniques, strategies and

interventions learned and used by counsellors are recognised as being inadequate to work with different groups. From the previously dominant perspective, which is called Anglo-European by some, a pluralist perspective has been reached which obliges us as investigators, teachers, students or collaborators of the counselling process to question the validity of the theories, techniques and strategies which we have been using while going about our profession.

Pedersen (1991) described multiculturalism as *the fourth force in counselling* and in the helping professions in general, although it may better be called *the fourth dimension*, seeing that the help originates in a cultural context. Specialists on the subject consider that multiculturalism must include differences based on religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic factors, age, gender, physical disabilities and even levels of acculturation and assimilation (Sue, Ivey, and Pedersen, 1996).

Those who defend the multicultural paradigm suggest that it is complementary to psychodynamic, behavioural and humanist paradigms, due to the fact that they refer primarily to intrapsychic factors which affect human development having left the study of cultural influences to sociologists and anthropologists. The multicultural movement assumes the existence of multiple perspectives, being close to social constructionism, in that its approaches to and the meanings of reality are developed through social interaction and to constructivism, that is to say how personal reality is constituted. It is advisable to identify the assumptions it stems from and to define its characteristics. Consistent with a post-modern scientific philosophy, the five following assumptions can be made about multiculturalism:

- 1 It accepts the existence of different points of view, none of which are either good nor bad, nor right nor wrong.
- 2 It entails social constructionism, insofar as people build their worlds through social processes (historical, cultural and social experiences) which contain cultural symbols and metaphors.
- 3 It is contextualist insofar as behaviour is only understood within the context in which it occurs, therefore being a challenge to psychological and counselling theories which are born from a particular cultural context.
- 4 It offers different approaches from the world more than one or another approach, because each perspective captures a valid and different approach.
- 5 It defends a relational feeling for language because language correlates highly with culture and the perception of reality: a relational approach allows truths and realities to be seen, beyond Western scientific traditions.

In multiculturalism, according to Sue and cols. (1998), the following ten characteristics can be identified.

- It values cultural pluralism, teaching the value of diversity.
- It concerns social justice, cultural democracy and equality.
- It helps the acquisition of the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to function efficiently in a democratic, pluralist society and to interact, negotiate and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds.

- It is more than just race, gender, ethnicity, including diversity in religion, national origin, sexual orientation, abilities and disabilities, age geographic origin, etc.
- It is pleased by the contributions and achievements of our culture and other cultures.
- It is an essential component of analytic thought.
- It respects and values other perspectives, but it is not neutral to those values, involving a commitment to changing social conditions.
- It means change at individual, organisational and social levels.
- It entails tension, disagreement with and willingness for honest confrontation.
- It reaches positive, individual, community and social goals and values the inclusion, co-operation and movement towards achieving these objectives.

For Touriñán (2004), multiculturalism is a characteristic of the context which surrounds interculturalism. Both have implicit ideological overtones due to the fact that while interculturalism has a bearing on the idea of cultural coexistence, multiculturalism emphasises the idea of separation over integration. This means that multiculturalism must accept, protect and encourage differences, independently of its intrinsic value and avoid the natural evolution of clashes between civilisations or cultures (Sartori, 2001).

It is better to use the term multiculturalism in the context in which education and intercultural counselling must take place. What does the term intercultural add to the multicultural one? From the traditional *anthropological approach*, key concepts worked out with respect to culture, group, ethnicity, subculture, minority or marginalisation are accepted but other interactionist, dynamic proposals which emphasise the interactive processes between cultures are added. From the *sociologic approach* its contributions to the formation of individual, social and cultural identities and the models which describe social relations between groups are taken into account; nevertheless it tries to overcome the dichotomy between the conflict model and the socio-psychological model through the structural-functional method which uses the system notion as a group of interrelated parts. From the *pedagogical approach*, in addition to stressing the role that culture plays in the formation and development of students' psychic processes because of the interiorisation of cultural instruments, the action of both teachers and students in activities which are significant to both is added. The fact that the characteristics of individuals and groups are dynamic and not fixed features is likewise incorporated when students are classified. It is demanded that the context and the interaction of the teachers and students from different cultures be included.

Due to all this, in our opinion, intercultural counselling: a) recognises that all counselling approaches and theories are carried out in particular interactive contexts; b) refers to an interaction where two or more of the participants belong to different cultures; c) includes any combination of techniques which a culture may bring with it; d) is characterised by professional help with culturally adequate attitudes, skills and knowledge; e) recognises the use of western and non-western perspectives in the help; f) defends that changes mean, in addition to the application of intercultural counselling programs, the introduction of this approach into the curriculum in all aspects of the education system, such as teaching, motivation, grouping and student evaluation techniques. The training of teachers and counsellors is also given top priority.

### **Intercultural interventions in Spain.**

Intercultural counselling has the dual role of prevention and reinsertion, helping the subjects avoid exclusion and helping the excluded to gain access to further education or the job market.

Intercultural interventions are analysed from the perspective of increased learning, career development and the empowerment of the persona.

Interventions for increased learning advances that students from other cultures may have acquired desperation experiences and the belief that the academic curriculum is irrelevant to working life. The experience of these young people of acquired desperation and the belief in the disconnection between the world of education and the world of work may stay with them for the their whole adult lives. This may entail a lack of confidence in their abilities, compounded by being discriminated against.

Intercultural counselling can improve these negative factors by:

- Demonstrating the relevance that formal learning has on working life.
- Clarifying the relationship between education and reaching professional goals.
- The perception of educational challenges which are offered to them.
- Reinforcing self worth and overcoming stereotypes related to ethnicity, gender, social class or culture.

As regards interventions for career development, as is well known, most vocational theories emphasise the amount of control that the subjects have over the process of decision making and over the psychological aspects which lead to success and professional satisfaction. Nevertheless, subjects from minority groups come up against diverse structural, institutional and social barriers which stop them from reaching that level of achievement and control over the development of their careers. These barriers are the result of discrimination against those minority groups or the socio-economic disadvantages linked to them. It is not necessary to waste time on the differences in the development of careers according to minority groups at this point as it is thought that it would be more interesting to present a model for the intervention in the development of the said groups from an intercultural perspective. For these subjects, questions on career development present other implicit problems such as economic, cultural and personal ones, which is why using a holistic approach is more appropriate, in addition to the counsellor having been trained in the corresponding multicultural competence. It is also essential that any career counselling program incorporates itself into a wider ranging model of intercultural education which helps ethnic minorities attain success and educational goals.

In this Presentation Session it's defended a global intervention model (Leung, 1995) which involves three modes of intervention (acting on the system, group counselling, individual counselling) and two types of results/achievements (career and learning related). Counselling on the system means an intervention in the environment to promote organisational and structural change and to try to eliminate obstacles to minority group's career development which entails the collaboration of diverse social and educational agents. The second mode of intervention is group counselling which is useful for people whose culture is more orientated towards collectivism rather than individualism. The third mode is face to face individual advice or counselling which allows for a closer relationship with the counselled subject and a deeper knowledge of their beliefs and values.



As regards interventions for personal and social development, one of the prime objectives of intercultural education is personal empowerment, achievement of a positive self concept and positive self-esteem as well as the development of interpersonal relationships and mutual respect among students from different backgrounds. Specifically, students who follow personal empowerment programs are characterised by:

- Development of self esteem, the implication in meaningful activities and the social incorporation associated with an occupation.
- Reducing the probability of adapting to unemployment as a lifestyle with its subsequent social harm.
- Increasing the probability of entering a world of challenging opportunities where they may attain other personal developments and achievements.
- Lastly, psycho-pedagogical interventions may:
  - Help the challenge to discrimination in the workplace.
  - Increase personal aspirations according to their abilities.
  - Provide dignified education and jobs.
  - Re-establish their cultural community's impetus
  - Increase the development of a culture of peace.

### **Final thoughts**

It must be to highlight the importance of the fact that, in today's globalised society, students learn to live without violence and with attitudes of tolerance and respect among them.

If the study of academic, vocational and personal behaviour of minority groups is relatively recent then more so is the establishment of multicultural counselling interventions. These interventions must start from two premises: all young people can learn and want to learn and secondly: cultural differences are real and cannot be ignored.

A fundamental aspect of any intercultural intervention is, therefore, the comprehension of students' cultural realities and its importance for personal-social and academic career development from which we can deduce that there exist various reasons to consider that on this subject an intercultural perspective is needed.

The 21st century offers a stage where diverse cultures intermix, with the education institution being in a privileged position to be able to promote knowledge and interaction between the students in a multicultural context; we must be aware of the fundamental role that we as teachers, in general, and counsellors, in particular, play as agents for social change and as the driving force for transformations that are required from this inclusive and integrating approach to education for peace.

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## LOS AUTORES

**Dra. Elvira Repetto Talavera**

Doctora en Filosofía y Letras, Catedrática Universitaria Facultad de Educación de la Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) Departamento de Métodos de Investigación y Diagnóstico de la Educación (MIDE) Coordinadora del Campo Científico de Orientación

Educativa Miembro fundadora y Secretaria General de la Asociación Española de Orientación y Psicopedagogía Representante por España en la IAEVG erepetto@edu.uned.es

**D. Mario Pena Garrido**

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) Departamento de Métodos de Investigación y Diagnóstico de la Educación (MIDE) Administra la asignatura Pedagogía Correctiva

Repetto Talavera, E y Pena Garrido, M. (2006, Diciembre). Cross-cultural counseling in multicultural spanish context. *Paradigma*, Vol. XXVII, N°2, Diciembre de 2006. / 93-107