

Social Inequality, Cultural Diversity: A View in Education Sociology

Caride Carbonell

University Del Norte Columbia

Email: Caride89@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze social inequality, cultural diversity from the point of view of Sociology of Education. This research uses qualitative research with descriptive analysis approach. The type of data used in this study is secondary data obtained from library research. The type of data presentation in this study uses a qualitative approach. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that integration must be won day by day with the exercise, by all, of solidarity and the will to negotiate, with the fight against all forms of exclusion and for a true equality of opportunities and civic and political rights. An active and unequivocal will is required on both sides to resolve the inevitable conflicts that will cause the diversity of values and customs, but above all social and political inequality. In the integration process, it is a question of jointly creating a new social space, which will probably be governed by new norms, born of negotiation and the joint creativity of the members of the majority group and those belonging to the minority group. Integration, creativity and negotiation are, therefore, inseparable concepts.

Keywords: *Social, Inequality, Education, Cultural Diversity.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The important technological and social changes experienced in recent decades have caused profound transformations in the societies around us (Newman, 2020). One of these social changes has been the multiplication of the cultural diversity of its components, a diversity that is sometimes used as a legitimization of the social exclusion suffered by certain minority groups, among them, many of the immigrants who come from countries impoverished from other continents (Wang, 2019; Farrington et al., 2019).

The growth in the number of members of these groups, which is going to continue according to the opinion of almost all experts, has raised new problems (at the same time that it has unearthed others, not so new, related to the social exclusion of the gypsy collective), regarding the relationships between education, social exclusion and cultural diversity (Jolley et al., 2020; Smith & Titmuss, 2021).

To an initial verification that there is a lack of consolidated theoretical frameworks and intervention models adjusted to the here and now, the article points out the need to take a certain distance from the educational and social problems posed

by this multiculturalization and this growing social exclusion in our society that allows us to distinguish the causes of the dysfunctions from their symptoms. The necessary discernment is required so that the urgent issues do not make us neglect the important ones (Greenhow & Galvin, 2020; Chan et al., 2020; Chaturvedi et al., 2021).

In this sense, the article aims to provide some reflections on some basic points, in the author's opinion:

1. The most important educational challenge would not be to achieve acceptance of cultural diversity in itself, but how to educate attitudes and convictions so that this cultural diversity is not used as a legitimization of social exclusion. It would not be about putting the accent on diversity and the hypothetical enrichment that it entails, but on the fact of being equal in dignity and rights.
2. The involvement of the entire educational community and the explicit will of those responsible for the administrations are essential so that the work of educational centers in this intercultural education and against exclusion can have some possibility of success.
3. It is urgent to put an end to the misleading or folkloric paternalistic approaches to these issues, which stifle and hide the fundamental objectives with a simulation of intercultural relations, festivals and rituals decontextualized and empty of referents and meaning.
4. The concept of integration needs to be reconsidered and operationalized. It must be seen as a process of collective liberation from the mechanisms of social exclusion in force, which involves all of us, exclusive and excluded, a process that must be initiated by the members of the majority group, who are the ones who have the power and resources to do so.

The fundamental objectives of a civic, intercultural and emancipatory education will be, therefore, the processes of teaching the personal and social skills necessary to achieve this integration, to manage the inevitable daily conflicts that will emerge, and to modify attitudes and actions in line with greater personal involvement in the fight against all forms of social exclusion and in favor of solidarity (Tesar, 2020; Alcala et al., 2019; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018).

One of the most important documents of recent years, as regards the analysis of the educational fact and even more specifically its expectations for the future, is the so-called "Delors Report". Produced for UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, this report outlines the challenges and priorities to be taken into account in the new century. Using a fortunate architectural simile, it states that the four pillars on which education in the next century must be based are: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

Putting these four objectives on the same level of importance acquires a special significance, here and now, in post-industrial societies that progressively, and as a consequence of the incredible development of information and communication techniques, find themselves immersed in processes of growing complexity (Sobaith et al., 2020; Garner et al., 2018). Especially if we take into account the paradoxical fact that this greater technological development has collaborated –or at least has not prevented it– in the objective fact that the

gap between wealth and poverty, between the integrated and the excluded, instead of achieving the desirable opposite effect (Thomson & Persud, 2018; Belpaeme et al., 2018).

For all these reasons, these societies of the «third industrial revolution» have not only seen social inequalities increase within them, but they have also seen new forms of inequality and social exclusion grow, related to the increase in the cultural diversity of its members, mainly due to international migration.

Indeed, the profound technological changes that we have referred to and that we have experienced mainly in the last three decades are facilitating and stimulating movement from one part of the world to another. Not only of merchandise and resources, but also of ideas, images, messages, and people, sometimes almost alienated by the desire to live in those paradises of compulsive consumption that offer the seductive images of advertising and the mass media that today are spread all over the planet (Paton et al., 2020; Paraschenco & Enineers, 2019; Kourgiantakis et al., 2020).

It is, in part, for this reason that the poorest, the hungriest, and the most needy do not emigrate, as is commonly believed. In order to emigrate, it is necessary to have reached a certain level of economic development and access to information. It could therefore be said, stretching the semantics a bit and with the risk of appearing to be a play on words, that the fundamental objective, the motor of most economic migrants is not so much to flee from poverty but rather to go towards greater well-being for him and his family (Zachos et al., 2018; Husni, 2020).

This increase in immigration and multiculturalism has been recent and sudden in the countries of southern Europe, due to well-known political, economic and social causes. Thus, if during the 1960s Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal still had a negative migratory balance (in other words: the number of those who emigrated was greater than that of those who immigrated, by a difference of 551, 435, 792 and 1,300 thousand people, respectively), in the eighties, these balances were all positive (350, 268, 770 and 270 also in thousands of people and in the same order) (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020).

This change in trend is probably the reason for the widespread conviction, much repeated in the media, that Spain has gone, in a few years, from being a country of emigrants to being a country of immigration. A hasty and uncertain statement, since, if it is undeniable that the trend has been reversed, we must also remember that there are still seven residents with Spanish nationality abroad for each non-EU immigrant residing in Spain, according to official statistics from the year 1996.

In addition, there is nothing to suggest that we have reached a ceiling, far from it, in these migratory movements towards our country. On the contrary: everything seems to indicate that these immigrations will increase, and very considerably, in the coming years. We will expose some references about the basis of these predictions:

The opinion of practically all specialists on the migratory act coincides, in general terms, with this phrase that Bichara Khader already exclaimed at the end of the eighties: No police barrier can act as a retaining wall for the new migratory flows in the Mediterranean. If there is a lack of economic development on the southern shore to dissuade candidates for emigration, to keep them in their homes, to discourage them from leaving, to flee, we will witness an intensification of migration in the coming decades. We see, day by day, in the media communication, the dramatic confirmation of that prediction. Unfortunately,

economic development on the southern shore, in Africa, does not take place, but, on the contrary, the difference between them and us is, as we already know, growing (Balbachevsky et al., 2019; Kourgiantakis et al., 2019).

Also, in the early 1990s, many demographers, economists and sociologists, such as Livi-Bacci, stated verbatim: Europe is making a serious mistake by restricting immigration, since it will need it. Also of this opinion were the Catalan experts from the Department of Territorial Policy of the Generalitat of Catalonia, who in 1993 stated that it would be necessary to import 350,000 immigrants in the next 35 years, only in that autonomous community. That is 10,000 each year. The current contingent policy, the only system for accessing Spain as a non-EU foreign worker, has always been well below this figure.

As various economists and demographers have noted, these long-term projections are quite risky. In fact, the percentage of adults who work under contract in our country is one of the lowest in the European Union (only 42% of women compared to almost 80% of Swedish women, for example), so a major change in social policies, family protection, etc. could release significant reserves from this statistically inactive population. But in the short term, if the recommendation of the aforementioned experts were followed from today, next year the annual work permits would be multiplied by three, and if this rate were maintained, this could mean doubling the current immigrant population in a period of approximately three or four years.

B. METHOD

This research uses qualitative research with descriptive analysis approach. The type of data used in this study is secondary data obtained from library research. The type of data presentation in this study uses a qualitative approach.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Lack of Models and References

We have emphasized the term autochthonous at the end of the previous point, because it must be recognized that, in some of these areas, and very singularly in Catalonia, the term autochthonous is designated, in many cases, simply to the one who arrived before. Three out of four Catalans, according to official censuses, or they, or their parents or grandparents were born outside of Catalonia. When it is said of some of these regions that they are lands of passage, the whole truth is not being said: the truth is that they are lands of passage, but also of settlement. Also, when we talk about multiculturalism and immigration, we tend to forget another group that immigrated to our state half a century ago, and that continues to be culturally different and socially unequal: the gypsy people. Their number, according to all estimates, exceeds that of all non-EU foreigners combined.

It must be recognized, however, that there is a certain confusion on the part of socio-educational agents in the face of these relatively new international migrations, derived from the fact that neither previous professional experience with members of the Roma community turns out to be very useful, nor can experiences carried out in other countries with a greater tradition than ours in welcoming extra-community migrations in this century be mechanically imported. The experience of other countries, in addition to

being difficult to adapt, is sometimes more full of failures than successes.

If an attempt were made to import, for example, to Catalonia the experience of other countries such as that of Quebec, in Canada, in the organization of reception classes for adolescents who joined our educational system late, the difficulties that this would entail would become evident, since the linguistic, social and political reality of Quebec is very different from that of Catalonia, much more so than is sometimes claimed, even though it is also a bilingual territory. And even the characteristics of the immigration it receives. The effort to adapt these foreign experiences to our reality sometimes involves as much work as creating a new model. That is why, often, they rather indicate to us what we should not do, the errors in which we should not fall. Indication, certainly, not negligible.

We must also recognize that this lack of experience means that there is still little consolidated reflection and, therefore, a scarce revalidated theoretical framework from which to build ad hoc intervention models. It is no less true that more and more researchers are busy and concerned about these issues in our universities, but teachers, workers and social educators are still operators with few specific tools and also, it must be said, with a shortage of resources. This lack of intervention models and theoretical references have been supplied, as could not be otherwise, with volunteerism and improvisation, especially by associations of solidarity with the excluded.

This voluntaristic activism, undoubtedly supportive and anti-racist, in the eighties elaborated discourses and assessments that, at times, were a bit naive about this multiculturalism and the fact of extra-community migration, then still incipient. Those songs of tolerance are still heard today, those affirmations that saw great wealth in diversity, and that considered little less than an offense to affirm that foreign immigration was a problem that had to be addressed as such.

But those speeches today only have a reputation among the few who can preserve that naivete – often combined with a good dose of paternalism – or among those theoreticians far from reality, who practice bullfighting. Among the professionals who have immersed themselves in it, these assessments are more and more nuanced, to the point of affirming that this mutual enrichment is impossible in the current social context, since previous conditions and social attitudes very different from those present are required to that possible.

We must recognize that this new diversity that lives badly among us is not yet perceived by the majority of our fellow citizens as a great wealth, and that it will not be until we all learn to adequately manage the problems that coexistence with this new diversity and with the social inequality that afflicts it. This is a crucial issue, which we will return to and expand on later.

2. Cultural Diversity as a Pretext and Legitimation of Social Exclusion

Given the evolution of conflict in these new social contexts, it gives the impression that due to the inevitable slowness with which the institutions react, once again, it has not been they, until now, who have led the problems, but that we have all been a bit behind these. In addition, it must be taken into account that public opinion is beginning to exert

considerable pressure on the different political groups, which act and make decisions with the handbrake blocked due to the lack of models that we spoke of earlier, and also because of that pressure and because of the fear of the electoral costs that positive discrimination policies towards certain minority groups may entail. Some assessments of the causes of the poor results obtained in the last municipal elections by some political groups point to their positive and supportive action with the excluded minorities during the period of their previous mandate.

It must be recognized without acrimony that, until now, we have not acted with a correct vision of the future, giving the importance that corresponds to preventive actions, not only on occasions when it was evident that conflicts would arise, but rather we have acted almost always, both in schools and outside of them, under the pressure of the most urgent, towed by the urgency of seeking palliatives to faits accomplis. It seems that, in these issues, the sentence that states that if you worry too much about urgent issues, you run the risk of neglecting the important ones is also fulfilled. Thus, one of the main deficits that many of the existing intercultural education proposals present is their repeated forgetting of the socio-political conditioning factors that make it possible or prevent it. It is still too common, as we said before, the naive tendency of some pedagogues to believe, above all, in the automatic enrichment, per se, that diversity implies, and in the strength of the virtue of tolerance. to guarantee future coexistence and social peace. They do not realize the danger of reinforcing differential racism and social exclusion with this well-intentioned but, deep down, almost always paternalistic and ethnocentric attitude.

So, from our point of view, we should not treat these issues as if the educational problem were to achieve acceptance of cultural diversity in itself, as seems to be deduced from most of the materials, didactic proposals and pedagogical recommendations on education intercultural, each day more abundant. The central educational problem, and which is very rarely addressed directly, is certainly how to identify and deactivate prejudices about minority groups, but, above all, how to educate the social attitudes necessary to avoid the use of this cultural diversity as a pretext and legitimation of the social exclusion they suffer. In other words: the starting point and backbone of the intercultural education that we need should not be respect for diversity or the cult of the virtue of tolerance; always and in any case, the central and recurrent nucleus of the discourse must be, simply, the fact that we are equal in dignity and rights, the unquestionable conviction that we are much more equal than different.

Probably from pure knowledge, from repeating it so much, we forget that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; perhaps the sequins of cultural diversity hide it from us with their glitter and brilliance. We confuse the word diversity (which is not the term that means the opposite of equality) with inequality. And therein lies, precisely, one of the greatest dangers of intercultural education, since the insistence on the acceptance of (cultural) diversity tacitly implies, almost always, an invitation to the acceptance of (social) inequality, as one more manifestation, as another natural consequence of cultural diversity.

They are poor because they are different, and we must accept this diversity/inequality, without trying to make them like us, since deep down this diversity

enriches us all, it would be the caricature of the message that is spread in the media and in the schools, with an undoubted calming effect on our consciences, exonerating us from any responsibility, thanks to the fatalism of the approach.

An old adage from the world of education used to say: There is nothing in the intellect that has not first passed through the senses. There is no doubt for educators that the senses, the word and reasoning are the basic tools for any learning. But the truth is that if diversity is so evident that you only have to want to see it to discover and value it (through the cognitive processes associated with that «first pillar», learning to know, of the aforementioned Delors Report); equality is not something so obvious, since it cannot be perceived, nor can it be scientifically demonstrated that we are equal, it is not even evident that we can come to see its necessity through the path of intellectual reasoning.

The equality of human beings is a conviction, an unprovable moral axiom, a non-negotiable starting point of our civilization; and educating in this conviction and in the values that are associated with it, is a much more difficult task than valuing diversity or tolerance. A task that is much more deeply linked to the pillars of learning to live together and learning to be, the two pillars perhaps with less school tradition, with fewer teaching-learning models and methods. With greater difficulties for professionals, also, in their transmission and education, since they require maturity, knowing how to live together and knowing how to be, present and consolidated in the same educator. Because as we know, these learnings are transmitted much more effectively (or perhaps they are only transmitted) through socio-affective and emotional channels, by imitating the attitudes of the people we choose as a behavioral model. And in this transmission, those privileged auxiliaries of learning, the senses, the word and reasoning, can play an important role but much more secondary than in the learning of concepts, knowledge and manual skills.

This is the reason why these topics related to changes in attitudes and education in values are usually located in school curricula, in the so-called transversal axes. In other words, those that, rather than being characterized by specific conceptual content that must be taught and learned, are distinguished by their procedural and especially attitudinal content, by the fact that they are something more than subjects, since being precisely attitudes and values must permeate the entire educational curriculum, and also throughout the entire schooling period. It is not necessary to underline the practical difficulty of developing this part of the curriculum in the classroom, especially if the teachers have not internalized, embodied, their own, those values that are trying to be transmitted.

But, in addition, so that this more educational than instructive work can be carried out in the classroom, it must begin beforehand, in a certain way, outside of them. It is true that the resolution of the problems of social coexistence is a responsibility of educational centers, but not only theirs. There must be a minimum of social conditions for it to be possible to assume this responsibility. What is needed is a will, an attitude and actions on the part of the citizenry, but above all on the part of those responsible for compulsory education, in the line of wanting and making it possible for free citizens to be educated, worthy, critical and supportive. In addition, this will must be visible in their decisions and actions and not only be heard in speeches and theoretical reflections. If the necessary wills

and means are not put in place, it does not seem lawful for us to continue blaming almost all the problems of social coexistence on the school and the institute.

It is very important, in this field of civic education and for coexistence, to mobilize all available resources and strategies of social pedagogy. Plan, for example (and it is already becoming urgent), impressive campaigns in the media with the largest audience, to change the prevailing uncivic attitudes. For example, increasing the collective conviction that citizenship consists, very often, in the willingness to put the interests of the community ahead of personal interests, when this is necessary and possible. Or convincingly explaining that certain positive discriminations are absolutely necessary to achieve a fair society with real opportunities for equality. The conviction must be generalized that, if dialogue is only possible from equality, intercultural dialogue will only be possible from the recognition of identical human dignity and identical civic, political and social rights in the other. Without this collective work of social pedagogy through all means, we condemn the work of educational centers to be a bubble disconnected from reality.

In these social pedagogy campaigns, it must be taken into account that an education aimed only at raising awareness and committing to the indispensable legal recognition of this equality will not be enough. It is also essential to raise awareness in order to achieve real recognition of this fellowship in everyday life. Therefore, the objective is not simply to increase the information of students or citizens. Not even affect their training. We must be realistic regarding our possibilities, but utopian in our objectives, and what we must seek as educators is a transformation in our students and fellow citizens, which implies their personal involvement in these social issues. A real awareness that the fight against social exclusion is not just the responsibility of education or social service professionals, but that we should all feel concerned, and we should all seek personal coherence between the principles that we defend and our daily actions.

Strictly speaking, citizenship is not acquired nor can it be granted by decree, through a residence or nationality document. It is only really acquired when it is recognized on a day-to-day basis by the rest of the fellow citizens. And this acceptance of the other in conditions of equality must be externalized, materialized in concrete and visible attitudes and actions. This externalization is also an essential part of this learning of knowing how to live together, which the Delors Report calls for, with those who should be able to continue being different, if they so decide, but who must stop being unequal for the mere fact of being different.

It is for all these reasons that we must be very cautious with all those actions in the field of intercultural relations, which, as we pointed out earlier, focus their attention on diversity, on the differential fact, and also, almost always on the more folkloric aspects of this diversity. Especially if they have an explicit or implicit educational intention. With this concept of intercultural pedagogy, with these diversity parties and intercultural weeks (and also with slogans as equivocal as that: "we are equal, we are different", or "equality to live, diversity to coexist", etc.) Very often, sometimes in an involuntary and little conscious way, they decisively contribute to increasing the confusion, to hide, to deny, the set of conflictive, real relationships of power and marginalization, of domination and

submission existing between the group majority and minority groups. And this denial is one of the most important components of most intercultural relationship conflicts, and the hard core of the hidden curriculum with which this ideology is transmitted in many educational centers.

In addition, and probably unintentionally, this folklorizing approach collaborates to divert attention from that fundamental educational objective: to identify and deactivate prejudices and the legitimizing mechanisms and discourses of exclusion. With this superficial and stereotyped way of understanding intercultural pedagogy, this fundamental educational objective, in practice, always ends up being drowned, hidden, buried under a simulacrum of intercultural relations, consisting, in the best of cases, of an exchange of cultural elements (musical, artistic, literary) decontextualized, mummified and empty of referents and meaning.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that integration must be won day by day with the exercise, by all, of solidarity and the will to negotiate, with the fight against all forms of exclusion and for a true equality of opportunities and civic and political rights. An active and unequivocal will is required on both sides to resolve the inevitable conflicts that will cause the diversity of values and customs, but above all social and political inequality. In the integration process, it is a question of jointly creating a new social space, which will probably be governed by new norms, born of negotiation and the joint creativity of the members of the majority group and those belonging to the minority group. Integration, creativity and negotiation are, therefore, inseparable concepts. For this reason, one way to summarize the fundamental objectives of an intercultural and emancipatory civic education would be to affirm that they are the teaching-learning processes of this coexistence, of this negotiation, of this joint creativity, in order to put an end to the current unjust determinism that condemns to misery, already before birth, a great multitude of human beings, and among them, also, although we do not always want to see it, many of our fellow citizens.

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