

# **INTERACT – Intercultural Active Citizenship Education**

**Universidad de Valladolid**

## **WP 14 REPORT**

### **Data Analysis – Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals**

This report gives an account of the work carried out in Work Package 14 which focuses on the teachers' understanding as transformative intellectuals and it aims to find out about the *teachers' perceptions* about intercultural active citizenship education; to find out about the *teachers' perceptions* of their impact on society while citizenship educators; and to find out about the *teachers' perceptions* of their students' impact on society while citizenship students.

#### **Guidelines agreed:**

In the 5<sup>th</sup> INTERACT meeting in Madeira, February 2007, we agreed some in order to facilitate the comparative/contrastive analysis. These guidelines are:

#### **A. The teachers' construction and reproduction of knowledge**

- epistemological framework(s)
- approaches to curriculum
- strategies for enabling new discourses
- hidden curriculum

#### **B. Teaching/ Learning as a transformative process**

- teaching/learning aims
- pedagogical strategies
- teaching/learning materials
- transforming perspectives and attitudes

#### **C. Teachers' commitment to transform society**

- context recognition
- types of action
- direct action
- indirect action

- ideologies of transformation

#### **D. Teacher Education**

- academic and professional education (pre-service and in-service)
- needs assessment

#### **E. Teacher's Assessment**

- intercultural educator's role
- intercultural educator's competencies
- critical awareness of challenges and possibilities

Bearing in mind these broad categories and in order to give an account on teachers as transformative intellectuals, we intend to have an answer to the following research questions:

- *Do teachers see themselves as active participants in the transformation of their democratic societies into inclusive ones?*
- *How can they successfully involve their students in this goal?*

With the purpose of obtaining an answer to these research questions, we asked teachers the following questions:

- *Do you perceive yourself as an intercultural educator?*
- *What are you, as an intercultural educator, supposed to do in your classroom?*
- *Do you think that you have to contribute towards the transformation of society into a more inclusive one?*
- *What can you do in order to transform society into a more inclusive one? Aims, strategies, materials used, etc.*

The answers obtained to these questions will allow us to make a link to the previous categories. This link will be presented in the final conclusions.

### ***1. Do you perceive yourself as an intercultural educator?***

When asking this question to the interviewed teachers, in a first moment, they were silent. We supposed that they have doubts about what were we exactly asking them, but they just needed some time to think and reflect before giving us an answer.

A first approach to data allowed us to identify three different types of perceptions of the teachers as intercultural educators. Approximately half of them **showed to be convinced** about their role as intercultural educators arguing that, at least, they tried. The verb “try”, used by a lot of the teachers implies difficulty of being an intercultural educator, they are aware that it is not an easy task. Approximately the other half manifested that they perceive themselves as intercultural educators but that they feel **obliged by circumstances**, that is, the huge increment of diversity in their classes which requires from them, as teachers, a change of the role they play in schools. Finally, a few number of teachers flatly stated that they **don’t perceive themselves** as intercultural educators due to the fact that they feel it is not their role.

#### **Teachers that perceive themselves as intercultural educators:**

A group of teachers think they are responsible, in all the senses, of the education of their students.

*“A teacher is responsible of their student’s education in all the senses. I try to make them more respectful towards the rest of the people, more cooperative to the others. After all, interculturality is linked to education in values and all the teachers educate in values or they should”*

*“Yes, or at least I try”*

Some teachers are clearly convinced about their role as intercultural educators. They linked intercultural education to immigration and education in values. They state that, apart from teaching students, teachers have to educate them, so they have to go beyond school contents.

*“Yes, a teacher has to teach their students how to be better persons and to co-exist with all the members in society. Well, I understand interculturality as relating to others that are different to us, with immigrants, of course. Immigrants are persons just the same as we are but from a different place. There are no more differences.”*

*“Yes, I cannot just transmit some curricular contents; we are in the school to co-exist. The problem is that, nowadays, we deny educating and we just want to teach, which is much easier.”*

A Philosophy teacher manifested that interculturality is more than a way of acting but a way of being.

*“I see myself as an intercultural educator and as an intercultural person”*

**Teachers that perceive themselves as intercultural educators but obliged by circumstances:**

A group of teachers perceive themselves as intercultural educators but obliged by circumstances around them. The situation in their classes is changing day by day, so their performance has also to change. They perceive it as a demand of the new reality we are living in our national educative system, characterised by the arrival of immigrants.

*“From this moment, everything is changing. We will be obliged to be intercultural teachers, and I, as a teacher, consider it a very important and challenging issue.”*

*“By force, you cannot deny the new situation in our classes”*

*“Today, a teacher has to teach so many things, even interculturality. As an intercultural teacher I have to try that students learn to respect other cultures”*

**Teachers that don't perceive themselves as intercultural educators:**

Few interviewed teachers don't see themselves as intercultural educators. They even think that it is not their responsibility as teachers.

*“I don't know, I think it is not my job to be an intercultural educator.”*

*“No”*

A Geography teacher stated he didn't know what an intercultural educator was.

*“I cannot answer to this question because I don't know what an intercultural educator is”*

## ***2. What are you, as an intercultural educator, supposed to do in your classroom?***

Most of the answers are oriented towards education in values. Teachers feel that they, as intercultural educators, have to transmit their students certain values that will facilitate the co-existence in and out the classroom. These values are mainly respect and tolerance. For them, the best way to transmit and educate in values is by dialoguing and being an example for their students.

### **Teachers that, as intercultural educators, educate their students in values:**

Most of the teachers affirm that to be an intercultural educator you have to educate in values. They see themselves as a model for their students, that is, they have to do and say what they are trying to transmit.

*“We are living in a society that it is going to be a multicultural society very soon. Some years ago we just were gypsies and us, but now we are much more diverse people and we have to learn to respect ourselves.”*

*“We are an example for our students so we have to talk and dialogue very much to them”*

*“We can teach them values such as respect and tolerance”*

*“The comments a teacher makes have to be always oriented towards tolerance, respect and interaction”*

*“Educate in values”*

### **Teachers that, as intercultural educators, try to know their students and their needs:**

A teacher, in order to be an intercultural educator, has to know their students. This will allow him/her to know their needs and to give an answer to them the best way as possible.

*“We have to try that all the students are integrated in the class. They have to talk and relate their own experiences. Students like very much to listen to other classmates”*

*“The teacher has to know their students and those with adaptation problems in order to help them”*

**Teachers that, as intercultural educators, try to offer their students instruments:**

Some teachers, apart from educating in values, consider they need to give/provide their students with some necessary tools or instruments in order to be able to manage in an intercultural society as ours. For them, interacting is a value and the best way to learn is to coexist.

*“To motivate our students towards the importance of interculturality and to provide them with tools, with experiences for them to know and appreciate diversity. They need to have experiences, to interact”*

***3. Do you think that you have to contribute towards the transformation of society into a more inclusive one?***

The interviewed Spanish teachers believe they should contribute to the transformation of society into a more inclusive one, although we find slight differences in their responses. There are teachers who are convinced they should contribute and believe that what they do is in this way. Another group of teachers think that they should contribute, and therefore they try it, although they find it is a difficult task. And another group of teachers state they should contribute but are not very optimistic of the results they will obtain.

**Teachers that think they should contribute to transform society into a more inclusive one, and believe they are doing it:**

A vast group of teachers think that if, with their work they contribute to transform society, that would be the ideal of teaching. They don't perceive themselves as only teachers that transmit their knowledge, but as educators of citizens.

*“This is an ideal we all should try to get, to build a better world and that our work could generate a change in society. That would be the aim of teaching.”*

*“Of course, let's see if we can get it step by step”*

*“We are teachers for that, to educate students who will be the future of our society and that they grow with positive values which makes society a better place to live”*

*“Of course we think that [teachers contribute to transform society]. If not we wouldn't educate our students into values. What we should do is to educate them to be*

*better persons, or at least good persons, respectful to others and treating everybody as equals”*

*“I think every teacher should try to educate citizens of a society, for that society to be better in every sense. We, teachers, are for that, don’t you think? For that we teach students so many things about values, citizenship, and knowing how to behave with others, to create a better society.”*

*“I think so. And I believe on the motto “another world is possible”. And I try to work for that all I can.”*

Some teachers state that they try their best to do it, but are not too optimistic of the results obtained. They see it as an utopia which for a long time has been pursued but without results. Even so, they think that they should contribute to transform society and that their work as teachers allows them in a certain way.

*“I do what I can. It would be idealistic to think that we contribute for that”*

*“At least we will try it. I don’t know if transformation is possible in a nowadays society, materialistic, selfish and consumer. But of course, we try it, that’s why I am a teacher”*

*“I think we are contributing in some sense. When educating our students, we are trying to educate better people with consistent knowledge and positive attitudes. All we do, supposedly, will help to create a more justice and balanced society, where inequities gradually disappear. Maybe it is an utopia because I suppose our own teachers tried to do the same with us and you can see the results”*

And finally, the other group of teachers, state that they should contribute to the transformation of society with their actions; not from their role as teachers but from their role as citizens, as people coexisting in society, fighting to give an end to inequities.

*“As a citizen, yes. We all should do that”*

*“Of course, but in society in general. There are certain things you can’t miss out, but as a person, not as a teacher. If, for being a teacher they will pay attention on what you say because they have you as a model, let’s benefit from that.”*

#### ***4. What can you do in order to transform society into a more inclusive one?***

A teacher of History said that the key for transformation of society is that teachers are willing to transform it, with words and with actions. It is very difficult to contribute to create a more inclusive society when the person herself/himself doesn't perceive it in that way and contribute, in a certain extent, to create a more exclusive society. For teachers to be convinced is essential, and not always is that the case.

*"I think what is important is the ideas the teacher has"*

*"First to be convinced that this can be done, and that is transmitted in ordinary communication"*

A wide sample of teachers reassure that teaching in values is the key for contributing to transform society into a more inclusive one. Values make people be more solidary and more conscious about problems around them. Values that teachers mention are, among others, understanding, respect and helping others.

*"I transmit values, which are the basis for interculturality and citizenship"*

*"Teaching in values is basic. As one of our aims, there should be that our students learn certain values and live according with what they have learnt. We should avoid inequities of any kind"*

*"Educating good students and good persons. Step by step, we maybe get something. I keep trying"*

*"What I do is including values in my teaching oriented towards the integration of those people in society"*

Some teachers go further in their ideas about the transmission of values, and adopt measures for action. They look for a way of living the school the same way as we should do outside the school. They try their students to participate, to get involved and see the results of their own actions.

*"For example, by organising something intercultural, with different countries. Recreate a solidarity market and donate what we've got to NGOs, or for example activities in which all the students participate."*

*"Through dialogue, participation, active experiences, role-plays"*

One of the teachers, with a realistic but pessimistic vision, affirms that she finds the solution in the change. She suggests changing the philosophy of the school, since



the inequities of society are taken to the school, which makes difficult to generate an authentic transformation.

*“In an inclusive school, there is a place for everybody. It is like a race in which everybody should get to the finish line. The one who needs two crutches, should take two crutches, and the one who needs more time, should be given that extra time, but the goal is that we are all there, that nobody skips the race. I think that the problem is that school transmits a type of society, the school reproduces the inequities of the world. For that reason the school should change and take the road to a type of school in which different options are available”*

### **Some conclusions:**

If we take into account teacher's perceptions regarding their role as transformative intellectuals, we can conclude that Spanish teachers perceive themselves as intercultural educators with a *high commitment* to educate their students towards interculturality by means of transforming their perspectives and attitudes. They mainly trust on education in values in order to get this transformation.

Teachers think that to contribute towards the transformation of society in to a more inclusive one is *an ideal*. They like thinking that their job is contributing to it in some way but they are not so sure about the results. In some way, we detected a pessimistic thinking on this issue. They think the best way to contribute is by promoting student's participation, dialogue and respect. They try to make their student's involved towards this transformation. If a student performs in an specific way inside the classroom he/she will perform the same way outside it. Teachers agree that students' education has to begin in the school and they *feel responsible* for this education.