

# Report on European intercultural education practices

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## **1 Introduction**

The research has been conducted on the basis of theoretical reflection given to the Project by authors and partners involved<sup>1</sup> during meetings and contributions exchanged and shared in the preliminary steps of the research concerning the evaluation results of different case studies in the field of education.

The debate on the meaning of intercultural education is largely exposed in the report and in many other publications.

In complex societies education plays a major role to equip young people for making the best use of living in diversity. It is equally important to encourage adult-learning by “training the trainers” like teachers and other facilitators who can pass on their knowledge and information, thus creating a much desired “snowball-effect”.<sup>2</sup> Some tools have proven successful in the process of intercultural learning and training. This report is meant at introducing to projects or actions which are examples of “good practice” on a trans-national level in Europe and that can be used as tools for dissemination of an inclusive educational culture.

This research has led to the recognition of different stages of intercultural education development: the evaluated practices showed how distinct is the interest in the definition of “interculturalism”: a bigger focus on the definition of what is “interculturalism” and “multiculturalism” is distinguishable in Italy, where experts and researchers are currently committed in a strong effort for the definition of the meaning of interculturalism and consequences of diversity. In other European countries (particularly in northern Europe), most activities and projects are directed to answer to practical and ordinary needs of migrants. In the documents collected for the completion of this research, most northern practices are mainly intended as interventions on specific topics and problems (language, communication, inclusion), and rarely address much space to the preliminary definition of their approach, within the debate on multiculturalism and cultural diversity management.

In practices identified in northern countries, the need for the development of an intercultural dialogue and the promotion of a real understanding, is certainly considered as a purpose to address, but, from gathered documents and texts, the promotion of basic and civil rights is thought prior to the necessity of a definition of what is intercultural, what cross-cultural and what multicultural.<sup>3</sup>

In Italy and in other Mediterranean European countries this research has found out many projects on multicultural education, reflecting a general sensitiveness on the need to overcome the mere “melting-pot”, that is considered as the inclusion model adopted by Anglo-Saxon liberal societies.<sup>4</sup>

In Northern Europe, we find Practices where the term multicultural has a wider use than “intercultural”.

Partially, this difference is linked to a different history of migration fluxes and to a different habit in the management of cultural diversity: in Italy and Spain, and in other south-EU countries, there is a recent tradition of immigration because contemporary fluxes began 20/30 years ago, while, in other countries, the colonial policies favoured a earlier beginning of migration fluxes towards “motherland” (i.e.: India or Pakistani towards England; North Africa towards France).<sup>5</sup> For countries with a weaker colonial past, the immigration has began recently (late 80’s). This new phenomena generated surprise and also a general sensitiveness that imposed a reflection on terms and labels: much attention was spent in this country in the effort for the self-definition of the national sociological model of migrant citizens inclusion<sup>6</sup>.

The effort was then oriented to the overcoming of the two main models of inclusion that are usually used to depict differences in national systems, both from legal and theoretical point of view: multiculturalism (UK) and assimilation (France). As France, Britain, and other northern countries faced migration many decades ago, the urgency of self definition is more hinted.

Within Italian educational context, in particular, the demand for understanding the identity of the nation throughout the adoption of a specific model is largely resolute, as an attempt to define the national model throughout the relation with others (countries).

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At the same time, recent migration countries look for definition and this brings to a variety of projects, reports, researches, where this attempt is clearly evident.

Thanks to the research undertaken, intercultural education practices across Europe showed two major functions:

1) They promote tolerance and respect for diversity. It deals positively with the appearance of prejudice and racism on an individual and group basis, by providing the attitudes, skills and knowledge to function across cultural divides. These practices affirm difference and provide a platform for children and communities to assert their culture and individuality with confidence. It prepares them to live productively in a pluralist society.

2) Other practices provide equal educational opportunities. They assume that children cultural differences will be acknowledged, and will influence their learning process and must be catered to. This function recognises and makes resources available to deal with genuine ethnic considerations such as language, culture, and discrimination fighting.

## **2 Criteria for the selection of practices**

The first criteria at the basis of the research was the prominence of intercultural dialogue, that implies a significant interest in understanding, exchange and reciprocal knowledge between natives and foreign citizens. At the same time, some practices have been chosen for evaluation even if they did not concentrate on communication, exchange, and dialogue, but focused on the offering of tools/abilities that are necessary for migrants in order to accomplish their citizenship in European countries (i.e.: language course, extra-tuition, special teaching). In next chapters this difference will be underlined by a classification (A – B projects), that will be used as main reference to understand the typology of evaluated practices.

This research has intentionally chosen to give some representation to this kind of projects that are particularly efficient and valid in northern Europe, and that assign priority to the needs of immigrant as a *sine qua non* condition for the realisation of a further intercultural dialogue. This trend can be seen as an operational translation of an interpretation of needs on the basis of an asymmetrical relation of power that lies behind

these needs-oriented practices: reduced chances for migrants to access to resources, power, representation are considered as a consequence of a structural asymmetry in the level of exercise the citizenships, based on a *minus* of rights, communication abilities, condition of life that affect migrant daily-life.

The choice of most intercultural education practices of northern countries tend to differ from the general drift in central and south of Europe; here, in particular from the 90's, practices progressively substituted citizenship with multiculturalism, where diversity is the independent variable of interventions and projects; on the contrary in northern countries where welcoming and inclusion policies are more consolidated, the purpose of an intercultural project is to give to immigrants access to civil and basic rights that must be ensured to every citizen.<sup>7</sup>

This means that we can observe stronger efforts in promoting inter-multicultural dialogue than in the guaranteeing of citizenship, intended as the benefit of fundamental rights for migrants.

This assumption has no scientific relevance and it is not based on academic discourse reporting but on the observation and contact with experts, practices and methodological discourse on intercultural work. It seems, nevertheless, that this trend has concerned, in particular, southern countries with more recent history of migration. Northern practices seem to concentrate much more on language courses, training, and all the kind of services that enable migrant to act citizenship.

### **3 Methodology**

For the analyses of national documents and case studies, this report focuses on the project guidelines for the evaluation of case studies.

In addition to this we referred to the report worked out by M. Repetti (Report on University), which offers a wide description and analysis of the concepts that distinguish practices in multicultural society.

The focus of this analysis was the definition and the evaluation of practices associated with specific local and national European contexts.

Practices evaluated are based in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, France, Greece, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Belgium.

Some of these projects are the results of transnational cooperation, within specific EU funding Programmes. In particular Comenius Project of Socrates Education Programme is the most frequent source of funding of this practices.

Even though the concept of intercultural education is not explicitly referred to or conceptualised in aims and activities, the intercultural dimension of practices is differently mentioned in the documents gathered during the research, as well as in Project texts.

Most practices have been found on Internet thanks to databases including projects on multicultural education issues.

Some have been identified thanks to transnational contacts with professionals working in education Department of European cities.

The research of intercultural education practices has shown some difficulties because, in this field, practices are less visible: the teaching contents prevail on communication and intercultural dialogue promotion activities. For instance, a school can develop a very good practice, with or without any effort to spread results or information on the Project. This kind of hidden work is particularly related to schools, which implement very Good projects, that are not appropriately disseminated.

One of the limit of this research was, in fact, the need to rely on information found on the web. The researcher is therefore aware about the chance to “lose” valid practices, that are not accessible by the Internet. As a result, the ability to use multimedia communication tools affects the level of dissemination of the Project and act as a “unconscious filter”, that generates isolation from the panorama of recognised best practices.

At the same time the web spreads activities which have a minimal structure: most of them are transnational projects, included in databases and directories that list all financed activities.

Once identified the intercultural education projects, the contact persons have been reached by email or telephone in order to ask main information necessary to understand if the Project could be considered as a valid practice.

#### **4 Typology of Practices**

The intercultural dimension is a constituent factor of the Project, but, in some case, the term in itself is not used (see Denmark case study, **Peace project**).

The intercultural aspect of the case study can be found in language teaching through the emphasis on awareness (see Greece case study, **Synthesy project**), language tuition (see Finland case study, 10<sup>th</sup> form comprehensive school in Helsinki, Italian tuition in Italiano Insieme- Milia Multimedia per Italiano L2.), social disadvantaged area and groups (see Sweden case study, **Follow your dreams not the stream project**, **Nannies Cheb** in Czech Republic), conflict resolution (see: Denmark case study, **Peace project**; the **Islam dialogue** in Netherland), understanding of other cultures (see: **Stage d'été interreligieux** in Belgium; United Kingdom case study, **Connecting histories project**), equal opportunities (**Provaci ancora Sam**, Italy), teachers training (see: **Formation initiale et continuée d'enseignants de l'enseignement supérieur à la diversité culturelle**, in Belgium).

The following table lists the projects that have been evaluated:

	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>Practice title</b>	<b>partner evaluating</b>
1	Norway	Vahl Primary School Multicultural Library	Italy Lai-momo
2	Norway	ICT in Schools of Oslo	Italy Lai-momo
3	Sweden	Follow your Dream not the Stream	Italy Lai-momo
4	Denmark	Peace Project Peace Education and Conflict Elimination	Italy Lai-momo
5	Netherlands	The Islam dialogue	Italy Lai-momo
6	France	Theatre et citoyennete'	Italy Lai-momo
7	Greece	Synthesi Project	Italy Lai-momo
8	Finland	The 10 <sup>th</sup> form school	Italy Lai-momo
9	United Kingdom	Gateway on cultural diversity Eurokids.org	Italy Lai-momo
10	United Kingdom	Connecting Histories	Italy Lai-momo
11	Czech Republic	Nannies Cheb	Czech Republic Multicultural Centre Prague

12	Germany	Finding a Common Language – the Experiences of a School in Berlin	Czech Republic Multicultural Centre Prague
13	Germany	Aziz Nesin Grundschule, Berlin: A Bilingual Turkish-German Public Elementary School	Czech Republic Multicultural Centre Prague
14	Spain	Aula Intercultural. El portal de la educacion intercultural	Ágora
15	Spain	Centro de documentacion en interculturalidad	Ágora
16	Spain	Escuela intercultural	Ágora
17	Spain	Instituto Universitario de Estudios Sobre Migraciones	Ágora
18	Belgium	Formation initiale et continuée d’enseignants de l’enseignement supérieur à la diversité culturelle	CBAI
19	Belgium	IRFAM: formations à l’interculturel dans le champ scolaire	CBAI
20	Belgium	A classroom of difference: intervention dans les écoles sur la diversité et le vivre ensemble	CBAI
21	Belgium	Age et transmission : initiative d’encadrements d’enfants et de jeunes issus de l’immigration par des personnes âgées pour faire de la remédiation	CBAI
22	Belgium	Santé mentale en contexte social. Multiculturalité et précarité	CBAI
23	Belgium	Le rôle du père	CBAI
24	Belgium	Stage d’été interreligieux	CBAI
25	Belgium	Atelier pour la Vie et l’Echange des Cultures – AVEC	CBAI
26	Belgium	Formation à l’interculturalité – CUNIC	CBAI
27	Belgium	Familles/Ecoles: dialogue admis	CBAI
28	Italy, Torino	Provaci Ancora Sam	Lai-momo, Massimo Repetti
29	Italy, Torino	Laboratori didattici del centro interculturale	COOP Lai-momo, Massimo Repetti
30	Italy	Italiano Insieme- Milia Multimedia per Italiano L2	COOP Lai-momo, Massimo Repetti
31	Italy	Bambini e nuove culture	COOP Lai-momo, Massimo Repetti

Projects evaluated can be classified in two main groups:

- TYPE A: teaching projects (language learning, tools for inclusion of migrant students, teachers training). This kind of practices refers to strictly educational practices that are normally managed by schools or education/training agency.

- TYPE B: projects aimed at disseminating the intercultural approach, awareness, knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

	COUNTRY/practice	TYOLOGY of PROJECT
1	Norway: Multicultural Library	A – B
2	Norway: ICT in Schools of Oslo	A
3	Sweden: Follow your Dream not the stream	B
4	Denmark: Peace Project	B
5	Netherlands: The Islam Dialogue	B
6	France: Theatre et citoyennete'	B
7	Greece: Synthesi Project	A
8	Finland 10th Form School	A
9	United Kingdom: Eurokids.org	B
10	United Kingdom: Connecting Histories	B
11	Czech Republic: Nannies Cheb	B
12	Germany: Finding a Common Language – the Experiences of a School in Berlin	B
13	Germany: Aziz Nesin Grundschule, Berlin: A Bilingual Turkish-German Public Elementary School	A
14	Spain: Aula Intercultural. El portal de la educacion intercultural	B
15	Spain: Centro de documentacion en interculturalidad	B
16	Spain: Escuela intercultural	B
17	Spain: Instituto Universitario de Estudios Sobre Migraciones	B
18	Belgium: Formation initiale et continuee d'enseignants de l'enseignement superieur à la diversite culturelle	B
19	Belgium: IRFAM: formations à l'interculturel dans le champ scolaire	B
20	Belgium: A classroom of difference: intervention dans les écoles sur la diversite et le vivre ensemble	B
21	Belgium: Age et transmission: initiative d'encadrements d'enfants et de jeunes issus de l'immigration par des personnes agees pour faire de la remediation	B
22	Santé mentale en contexte social. Multiculturalité et précarité	B
23	Belgium: Le rôle du père	B
24	Belgium: Stage d'été interreligieux	B
25	Belgium: Atelier pour la Vie et l'Echange des Cultures – AVEC	B
26	Belgium: Formation à l'interculturalité – CUNIC	B
27	Belgium: Familles/Ecoles : dialogue admis	B
28	Italy: Provaci Ancora Sam	A – B
29	Italy: Laboratori didattici del centro interculturale	B
30	Italy: Italiano Insieme- Milia Multimedia per Italiano L2	A
31	Italy: Bambini e nuove culture	B

The majority of projects belongs to the B group. This is presumably due to lack of documentation carried out from schools about A projects.

The research showed as most projects run by schools in northern European Countries and in UK are mainly focused on language learning for migrant or ethnic minorities students.



It is clear that language acquisition is seen as the fundamental step for inclusion of young non-natives.

This difference is probably due also to a different conception of special needs in education. In northern Europe migrant students who do not speak the language of arrival country, are inserted in classes with pupils with special needs (i.e.: disadvantaged, handicapped, children or with linguistic deficit).

This is meant to give them the opportunity to develop language skills and to reach standard curricular objectives, before entering the normal class. In south Europe this practice has generally been overcome, in order to empower communication abilities through interaction with the class: this approach tries to avoid any discrimination that would result from the constitution of separated group, that brings the risk of stigmatisation of differences and, consequently, of discrimination.

Another typology of project refers to Teacher Training, so called INSET (*in service training*). This typology of activity is certainly transversal to A and B projects: in some case the training is the objective of the Project (Denmark, Greece). In other practices, the training is an activity among others which has no fundamental relevant within the overall Project.

### **5 Actors: organisations and beneficiaries**

Practices evaluated were addressed to students, both belonging to ethnic minorities and nationals.

In particular, projects in group A were aimed at offering tools for communication to foreign students.

Project in B group were addressed at promoting intercultural dialogue, by involving parents, Italian natives and foreign, teachers, young, nationals and foreigners.

Organisations promoting evaluated projects are mostly belonging to public institutions or services. Those kind of organisations can be identified into four groups:

- schools or educational agencies,
- municipalities or local authorities,
- university departments or centres
- associations and non-profit organisations

Within evaluated practices, private organisations play a weaker role in the leading and management of projects. During the research, few structural networks were identified.

Most partnership have been built in response to the requirements of funding institutions, in particular in the field of transnational projects funded by Comenius, which often envisages the cooperation from other countries partners.<sup>8</sup> This is the most common form of institutionalised partnership, especially within transnational projects; for this reasons we can affirm that cooperation is basically linked to the funds, or at least to the funding institutions criteria. National or local projects see the cooperation between schools and municipalities. For local practices there is a level of cooperation with local actors that has not clearly shown by interviewed experts, though playing a significant – even if not visible – role in the implementation of intercultural practice.

## **6 Internal Evaluation**

Evaluation is an increasingly important activity in project management. The emphasis placed on evaluation by funding bodies and practitioners is at an all time high. The cycle of innovating, piloting, evaluating and refining together with dissemination of the process and its outcomes is a widely accepted model of development. Yet many project managers or professionals are unclear about what evaluation actually means and, more importantly, how do they do it in practice.

Most projects evaluated do not imply strategies for self-evaluation. For projects funded by national institutions, evaluation is confused with monitoring, as if the evaluation could be considered as a mere control/checking. This checking is referred to whether inputs match outputs, whether income balances expenditure, whether actual activity matches planned activity. It is also about recording the gaps between them. Evaluation is about explaining why the gaps exist. Monitoring is not the same as evaluation because it is descriptive rather than interpretive and is not intrinsically directed toward learning but the two are often confused. However, evaluation is almost impossible if there is no monitoring system.

While talking about evaluation, the report considered the assessment of practices that can be seen as a developmental process – a “torch” that helps illuminate problems and recognise good practices. The majority of examined practices lacks of this diagnostic and interpretive ethos, which should answer to this kind of simple but significant questions:

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- has the project produced the expected changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours or awareness?)
- has the project produced or increased opportunity for a real exchange between different cultures?

Some practices evaluated shown relevant effort to analyse and read processes to work on (Greece, Netherlands), and certainly this attempt will reduce the possibility of repeating mistakes. They will rather use mistakes, when they happen, as critical learning incidents.

The developmental approach is becoming the more popular of the two and many project managers are unhappy with the accountability model. Nevertheless, rigorous ‘quantitative’ evaluation is essential if the Project is funded with public resources. Most of education project funded by public institutions, as education and training are part of state competences in most countries; it is not a surprise that many funding bodies are more concerned with this type of evaluation but are increasingly aware that whilst it is an effective process for justifying existing expenditure, it is less effective for planning long-term investment.

## **7 Conclusions**

It has been difficult to obtain information about the grade of valorisation of lesson learnt from the practices. This aspect is really important because the Project can be translated into a wider context or to novel situations. Valorisation is closely related to impact analysis and is usually about the longer-term sustainability of a strategy rather than a particular practice. We can refer to this “learning” from the experience, as a sort of “capitalisation” but is more commonly a term applied to capturing the collective learning of a group of similar projects or a whole programme rather than an individual project.

On the basis of the case study evaluated, we can affirm that the typology of projects move around 2 or 3 main areas of activities (training, language acquisition, cultural dialogue). The difference is therefore determined by the methodology of the Project, whilst contents are not characterised by a relevant variety. Methods depend on the level of *cultural* and *process* awareness. The quality of the Project is consequently decided by the grade of control that the organisation can keep on the Project: the practice validity depends on the capability of the organisation (school, local administration, NGO) to

observe processes and dynamics generated by the Project, to evaluate the impact on the Project and to control them.

The project indeed is not just a sum of actions and of achieved results. Normally, the relationships between actions and individuals produce effects that cannot be completely foreseen. The “predictable” results are often accompanied by “unpredictable” effects that must be shrewdly and wisely managed.

In order to do so, the organisation must have a sufficient ability to self-evaluate, an habit to cross-examine the dynamics, to read effects from the qualitative point of view.

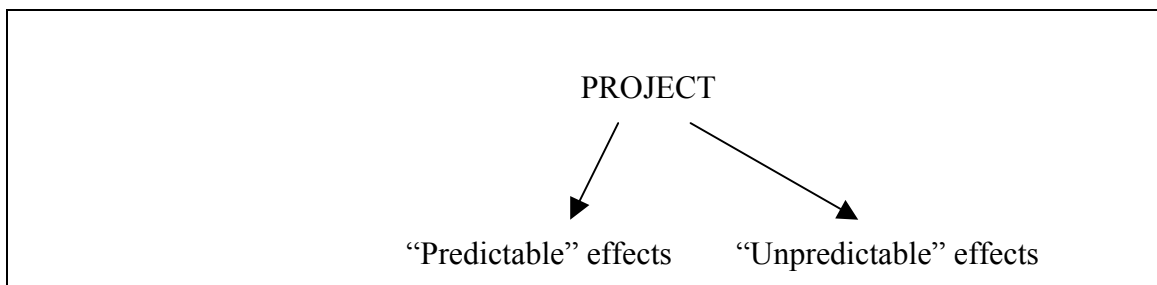
The aptitude and skill in evaluation are necessary to operate the right corrections and adjustments to the project, which must be able to observe, identify and answer to new needs.

In order to make this assertion clear, it can be useful to use one practice as an example. The Vahl School Multicultural Library reports some difficulties faced in the relationship with parents, who did not want their daughter to attend drama workshops, in particular outside the school building, because they were non convinced about this non traditional way of teaching.

The ability of the Library Director allowed to observe this aspect and to intervene, even if the Project did not envisaged the action undertaken to cope with this lack of trust.

Surprisingly, the most “adjustable” projects are the less structured, often carried out by small and local based organisations (i.e.: school projects).

We can synthetically draw the scheme that contains what explained above.



The large number of practices identified shows a fragmented and very extensive

operational dimension of intercultural education. Often, practices are similar but with no contact with other projects. Internet offer a box for a huge number of documents that explicate objectives, contents and actions of the projects. Nevertheless, the lack of a common *paradigma*, in terms of awareness about the “what has been doing until now in this specific field”, is nearly evident, as if no common understanding of the evolution of practices brings to start from scratch in most contexts.

Therefore, the policy-makers would hardly find inspiration from the overall system, since there is any European operational identity yet, due to the difference between national policies and model of social inclusion or integration of immigrants.

On the other hand, the observer will find innovative and distinguishing features in single good practices, that, even without constituting a unique and homogeneous pattern, contribute, with their specific strengths, to build patchwork of interculturalism. An underground working process that reveals the plurality of practices and that brings us to define intercultural education practices as a Implicit, fragmented system.

We can see the sum of European practices, as places and experimentations of a composite European laboratory for further policies on intercultural education. The inner intercultural building capacity relations of the practices might be assumed by local, national and European authorities as a suggestion or a starting point for the definition of norms and programmes.

The big challenge for the next decades will be therefore the overcoming of the dominance of difference and of non-communicating pluralism of practices, by avoiding, at the same time, the naïf temptation of a universal multicultural dogma that denies differences and specificities.

In conclusion, what can be sought-after and desirable, is a double direction that proposes the “Glocal” rhetoric in a constantly changing environment, where the rooting of traditional practices aimed at fostering interculturalism within education, is accompanied by a shifting abilities of organisation and work, capable to observe and read changes and complex processes of transformations of our societies.

## Notes

1 - Further information and the results of analyses conducted by partners are available on [www.interculturemap.org](http://www.interculturemap.org) website.

2 - M. Roncoroni, *Good practice in intercultural education learning from and for each*

- other*, in «Equal Voices», Issue n. 8, EUMC, <http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc/index.php>.
- 3 - M. Ambrosini, “Introduzione. Le seconde generazioni. Spunti per il dibattito italiano”, in M. Ambrosini, Stefano Molina, *Seconde generazioni. Un'introduzione al futuro dell'immigrazione in Italia*, p. XIII.
- 4 - M. Ambrosini, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, Il Mulino 2005, pp. 15-31.
- 5 - A. Rivera, *Etnia-etnicità*, in R. Gallissot, M. Kilani, A. Rivera, *L'imbroglione etnico, in quattordici parole-chiave*, Dedalo, Bari 2001, pp. 123-151.
- 6 - Ambrosini, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-215.
- 7 - This assumption is the result of the huge amount of projects and practices that have been observed and whose documentation has been read in order to select the case studies listed below.
- 8 - Comenius is a European Commission Project aimed at supporting education and training, within the Socrates Programme.