THEORETICAL APPROACH
AND EXPERIENCES
OF THE MOSAIC - PROJECT

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Abstract: In the opinion of many, integration is seen as being the capacity of minorities to adapt as rapidly and convenient as possible to the habits of the majority. To talk about competences of integration means to look close to the way of society organization and educational systems, to the way in which the media reflects the reality of a society, and the contradictions and difficulties the pro's encounter in education and public services in their daily life. The European Union gives priority in its policies to the problem of social inclusion that consider it to be an important element for successful economical development. In the context of social inclusion policies, the problem of migration in approached, which will continue to grow. The MOSAIC project approaches the problem of social inclusion through education, in the European context. The results of the research proofs that there is a demand for a higher awareness of the diverse situations in which citizen are found in multi-cultural society.

Key words: integration, learning, social inclusion, migration, education.

Competences for integration as a task for society ▬

"Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and inter-dependent. The flourishing of creative diversity requires the full implementation of cultural rights as defined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Articles 13 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. All persons have therefore the right to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice,

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*and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and all persons have the right to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Therefore it is necessary to promote „**through education an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and improving to this end both curriculum design and teacher education.**"* (UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by the General Conference at its 31st session in November 2001).

In spite of the declaration of the UNESCO, governments and also many employees working in the field of education still look at integration as the capacity of minorities to adapt themselves in the fastest and less disturbing way to the habits of the majorities. Correspondingly the work of professionals dealing with minorities is often measured by their success in enabling their clientele to „be as the majority is". Only if they reach this goal they are considered to be able to participate in an adequate way in what society offers and needs. According to the same logic, on the other hand minorities are looked at as so different, that there is no chance at all to change their „different culture" and they are left marginalized. So the adoption of the mainstream culture becomes an important step towards social inclusion. An educational attitude that respects possible differences organizes democratic debate and is committed to direct conversation in „a world of difference" (Anti-Defamation League, New York, *www.adl.org/education*) is often stated but it still has not become a reality in many institutions of the educational system. In contrast - despite of the declarations and legislation of the international bodies – in a lot of European societies xenophobia and negative attitudes towards minorities are on the rise again. It is often overlooked, that institutional and legislative approach of both national and European bodies are rather ambivalent than unambiguous when it comes to the matter of inclusion of minority groups like refugees, immigrants, disabled persons or other so called disadvantaged people. According to human and democratic principles there must be equal rights for all citizens no matter where they come from or how much they can contribute to the economic welfare of the country they live in. This is what European citizens can read in any preamble published of the public institutions. But how society organizes the educational system, the labour market and the social sector is often quite different from what is written in official high gloss magazines. These contradictions of course do not stop at the doors of public institutions dealing with educational matters. And they do not stop in the heads of the professionals dealing with the educational processes.

So to speak about competences for integration means to have a close look on how societies organize their social and education systems, on how the media reflects the reality of a diverse, quickly changing society and on the contradictions and difficulties professionals in the field of education and public services have to deal with in their

daily work life. To enable the public services to find new solutions under the conditions of change is the most important topic rather than to define competences of citizens who are considered as "to be integrated."

This statement reflects the every-day experience of – for example – teachers, who cannot choose only to educate children who have special competences. Either they deal with the children that come, whatever competences they have, or they reject one of the main issues of public democratic education: to offer education to everybody.

General issues related to Social Inclusion

The European Union gives social inclusion a high priority in its policy. Together with the Lisbon Strategy the EU passed the Social Policy Agenda in 2000, which led to a five-year action programme to achieve the goals set up in that Agenda. The EU mainly connects social policy to a successful economic development. So the Union gives great emphasis to the Lisbon goals, which are aiming to transform the EU into the most competitive region in the world. Programmes on social inclusion are rather an accompaniment of the measures taken to become a knowledge-based society with highly skilled labour forces more than being an independent goal. The concept of lifelong learning for example can not only be looked at as a progressive goal to enable employees to continue their personal learning and achieve a higher qualification but also as a need of the market to force employees to always follow up with new technology and new skills. This is not automatically the same interest working people may have concerning their skills or their personal interests to participate in lifelong learning projects. The priority of today's European policy is based on economic thinking and the influence of civil society and trade unions in European strategies is not very high (for more information see: European Trade Union Confederation, www.etuc.org). Economic pressures implemented by the so called globalization are transforming European societies and these transformations are creating various problems which are not so easy solved by programmes implemented by the European Union. Still, the situation in the member states is very different – be it at the economic level or in the way society functions, like for example the educational system. To contribute to the development of adequate methods for social inclusion at an European level is not therefore an easy goal and there is always the danger to neglect regional differences and needs. Especially the situation of the so-called transforming societies in the former socialistic countries is in many aspects different from the western countries. To develop tools which should fit for the needs of all European countries is not always adequate to the unique situation of one special country. And one result of the research done by the MOSAIC-project is, that it is very important that the EU keeps aware that it is necessary to install measures to function more bottom up than top down. But in spite of this there surly are a lot of

important developments that in one way or another influence most European countries and where common solutions are needed.

Migration and integration as important common issues for inclusion policies

Migration will continue from outside Europe into the European Union as well as labour mobility between the European countries will grow (see: www.network-migration.org). Globalization leads and will even more lead to a higher mobility of the international labour market in general. The differences between rich and poor countries, regions or segments of society are rising. At the same time nationalism, xenophobia and tensions between different ethnic or religious groups are rising as one result of economic segregation. The majority of the European people do not yet share the concept of the European Union as an ever-closer union. In most of the European countries there is a big political discussion about the European unification. This issue is a political battlefield. Especially the nationalistic parties, which are also represented in the European Parliament, are strongly opposing the European idea. So the aims, regulations, laws and initiatives of the European Commission cannot be considered common sense among its own citizens. European legislation and guidelines are not the only forces that are influencing the European societies. Discussions at national level mainly forced by the big media have also a great influence on how society looks at actual developments going on.

Especially the issues of labour migration, of immigration in general and of mobility between the European countries are subjects of a political debate in which a lot of social problems are mingled. The EU itself is sending different signs on how to deal with migration, minorities and tolerance. The Union is undergoing a very complex and contradictory process. On one hand it incorporated 10 new member states in 2004 and there are negotiations with more countries from Eastern Europe and with Turkey. But on the other hand the EU-policy is restricting not only people from outside its borders but also from the new member states from the freedom of mobility. The laws which are made as a consequence of the so called „fight on terrorism" and also the ones to restrict migration from non EU countries show a quite rough attitude of most of the member states towards the issue of migration in general. On one hand the EU is enacting antidiscrimination-legislations that should become national law in all member states, on the other hand, in order to protect the labour market of the old members, people from the former eastern countries like for example Poland are excluded from mobility in some of the old EU members like for example Germany. So some people feel as EU-Citizens of second class. On one hand the EU develops standards and programmes for social inclusion, on the other hand the liberalization of the market and the neo-liberal economic policies put strong

pressure on labour-rights and on social policies of the member states. EU policy is not and cannot be coherent as it is always a compromise of different interests and forces. And so its European citizens, who in their great majority are not as enthusiastic about European unification as are their governments, look at it quite critically.

In this situation it is crucial to enable all parts of society to deal with the new reality of a supranational institution that is more and more influencing their day-to-day life. A lot of people who live and work in Europe are not very well informed about the European Union. That makes it easy – for example – for nationalistic parties to misinform their electors about European policy. Of a special importance is the capacity of all EU-Citizens to accept and to deal with the reality of an intercultural society. Besides all the EU- and national programmes for social inclusion there is a strong need for rising the awareness of teachers, of disseminators, of social workers and officials of the public services for the big changes of the society in which they live. To reflect the concepts and needs of modern Europe and to be able to cope with diversity are the key responsibilities for disseminators in the field of education – and for all European people of today. To promote this kind of knowledge is one of the main aims of the MOSAIC-Project.

Methodological aspects

Empirical results of the MOSAIC-Project

The MOSAIC-Project deals with social inclusion by education as a general issue in the European context. But the institutions represented in our project are handling various sections of the educational system in each country.

So our clientele, our work conditions and of course the national educational systems, as well as the parts of society, mainly affected by social exclusion are quite different. Throughout our working process we realized that it is hardly possible to compare with a simple methodology – as we do not have the resources to work at a scientific level – the results of our empirical studies. Just to add the different results from our six represented countries was not our theoretical interest. But neither had we wanted to ignore the different backgrounds, conditions and experiences we all encountered in our daily work or that we learned of during discussions and meetings, by melting them together as if there were no differences. So we tried to focus on those general developments in the European societies which we all realize in our work contexts and which we consider important to be discussed by all employees in the social sector. In all of the six countries of the MOSAIC-Project - although to a different extent – migration and the issue of integration are important social topics. To deal with students, pupils and young adults with different origins, with different linguistic backgrounds and with quite different histories concerning their work life, their

experiences in the educational system and their family background is still a challenge for many teachers and public workers. In all of the six countries we have experienced teachers who are dealing in their different institutions with – partly - similar questions. And we have „experienced students", who the first to be asked to evaluate the work of the teachers, the institutional approaches and the methods used.

The questionnaires

Most of the institutions of the northern MOSAIC-partners Finland, Denmark and Germany are - besides other tasks – engaged in language courses for migrants. In some of the participating countries the schools offer as well vocational training, support in finding jobs and counselling for the personal work aims. In Portugal the partner works with a vocational school, an institution for persons with disabilities and a regional university whereas in France the partner offers a general qualification for disadvantaged –often-migrant - women in difficult work circumstances. In Romania the partner works in the field of antidiscrimination projects for Roma and training skills for long time unemployed people to improve their chances on the labour market. So teaching language skills and counselling to improve the students' chances on the labour market is the common field of the participating institutions.

The participating institutions were the following:

- *Portugal*: Algarve University, Irene Rolo Foundation, D. Francisco Gomes d`Avelar Professional School

- *Romania*: University of Bucharest, ARCA Association, Catalactica Association

- *France*: Socíeté Philomatique de Bordeaux, INFA-Aquitaine

- *Finland*: Harjavallan Kansalaisopisto (Adult Education Center), Eurajoen kristillinen opisto (Eurajoki Christian Folk High School)

- *Denmark*: Sprogcentret Haderslev (Language School), FOF Haderslev (Adult Education Center)

- *Germany*: Project „Ways into profession" of Passage, "Aizan für Mädchen" (Aizan for girls, a support centre for young migrant girls)

The first step of the empirical research carried out by the project was to collect data from the teachers, disseminators and trainers as well as from the students of the institutions that participated in the MOSAIC.

MOSAIC wanted to learn from the teachers about the methods and materials they use as well as about their personal experiences in teaching. They were also asked about the institutional approach concerning social inclusion of their target group. Students were asked not only to evaluate the teaching methods but also about their

opinion concerning the access to the educational system and about what ideas and wishes they had for making the system to better fit to their needs. Questions concerning their personal problems with the educational system, their access to suitable information for their further career and probable difficulties with the institutional culture of the country they now live in were as well part of the survey.

The evaluation

In a second step we developed a common schedule to make the results of the different countries comparable. Due to the above-mentioned circumstances (big variety of institutions, age, gender and nationality of the students, national legislation concerning migration and differences in the educational systems of the participating countries) a conventional comparison was difficult. So we used a qualitative methodology which allowed us to concentrate on the most important subjects for our purpose: the individual perspective of each student, the personal satisfaction with his or her learning process and the needs and wishes to improve the educational setting.

In spite of the great differences between institutions and among the target group in itself, there were some significant evaluations in common:

Most of the students were quite satisfied with the teaching methods, the material used and the professional approach of their teachers.

They mostly considered the quality of their instruction as quite high. They only wished to have more influence on the curriculum. They felt it necessary to better adapt the curriculum to their personal needs because often the participants in one class represent a big diversity of backgrounds and what fits for one student may not fit for another.

All students were very aware of subtle discrimination and prejudices. Many mentioned that this was what really bothered them. They considered very important to be treated as an individual and not as a member of a group, a minority or part of the so-called disadvantaged people. To be treated with dignity and not to be stigmatized were very important issues for all students.

According to the questionnaires:

The students have more problems with the bureaucracy in accessing the educational system. Many mentioned that the barriers to get into the system are too high (this is different in the Scandinavian countries where schools for adult people in general are easily accessible. In Denmark and Germany immigrants are compelled to attend language courses. Here the students were more aware that, in spite of their personal efforts, their chances to get access to higher education or to the labour market are quite bad).

Students who have had an insecure legal status in their host country often encounter problems with their personal caseworker. For them pursuing their personal education and work goals becomes a rather arbitrary process very much depending on the goodwill of the caseworker in charge.

Most of the students answered that they felt they had influence on their personal education goals but were much less optimistic about the reaching of their work goals.

Most students mentioned that influences not directly connected to their vocational formation like legal status, lack of contact to local people, leaving other family members in their country of origin in bad conditions, children at home without proper care were severely interfering with their integration process in the country they migrated in.

The majority of the students also agreed that active guidance and concrete follow up plans after their language course or their vocational training would be a big help in pursuing their life goals concerning education and career.

Those students who had degrees or completed vocational training in their home country stated that it was very difficult and often impossible for them, to find a job matching their professional background. Very often their professional degree is not recognized in the new country which forces them to either start a new vocation or to work in low paid, poorly recognized jobs.

Specific considerations

Diversity-training for teachers and disseminators

Teachers and disseminators are usually the first to notice sociological changes during the work with their clientele. They are also the ones who can provide information about the functioning of educational programmes. Do the programmes to reach certain aims as – for example social inclusion-serve for the purpose they were implemented? Or should they be adjusted to better reach the desired results? This is especially important as legislation; the educational system and the social programmes they deal with are more and more influenced by the European policies. They have to be able to evaluate their own working aims and methods and to make sure that the European bureaucracy gets to know if their programmes are working or not.

But teachers and disseminators often need better training to cope with the challenges they meet in a quickly changing European society.

The answers of the students in so different institutions and countries show that there is a demand for increasing awareness regarding the diverse situations the citizens of multicultural societies are experiencing. For disseminators the so-called social soft

skills like flexibility, empathy and intercultural competences become more and more important. A high communicational competence, the ability to collect new information and to deal with unknown situations is crucial for teachers and trainers in the quickly changing, diverse European society.

The intercultural dimension becomes even more important in all kind of social and educational work. Teachers have to deal with multilingual children and students. They meet various cultural and religious influences and beliefs. Their way of teaching itself may become a subject of different expectations and customs.

In this situation it is important, that teachers and trainers can benefit from the EU-strategy of lifelong learning themselves. Teachers who learned their profession 20 years ago – for example – did work under very different conditions from the ones they have to cope with today. To promote social inclusion by education, the first important step is to enable all employees in the educational sector to develop new professional skills that match the European societies of today.

The diversity training developed and piloted by the MOSAIC-Project wants to promote these skills for disseminators and teachers throughout Europe.

Intercultural education as an objective

It requires a fundamental change in our perceptions, convictions and actions. We must gradually develop a multi-layered identity, accepting that we are at the same time citizens of our municipalities, our regions, our countries, and citizens of the European Union. Only this attitude will foster our sense of tolerance and our curiosity towards the others, our commitment to respect, preserve and enrich the diversity of cultural features and values that are features of our European model"[57].

Concept of intercultural education was developing by international bodies and civil society groups dealing with educational processes - both at European and worldwide level. The term intercultural proposes processes "to enable the discovery of mutual relationships and the dismantling of barriers. There are close links to other educational philosophies, such as education for human rights, anti-racist education and development education"[58]. But these concepts are far from being mainstreamed into public education institutions. Although the educational sciences have been discussing issues related to intercultural education since more than 20 years, it depends very much on the philosophy of each institution if these concepts find their way into the formation of teachers, social workers and other disseminators. Also the

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[57] Jan Figel*, Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Trainings and Culture, on the conference "The Changing European Classroom" in Brussels the 10th of March 2005.*

[58] All different – All equal, Education Pack, European Youth Centre, 1995.

level of discussion in Europe is quite different, mainly depending on the history of each country. Countries with a colonial history and therefore a long experience with big migrant communities or countries with a labour migration background have had since years a controversial discussion on intercultural issues. In countries with ethnic minorities the discussions follow others lines than in countries where a lot of people are migrating to find better economic situations etc. So the discussion about intercultural issues is very much depending on the specific situation of the different European countries and a common agreement cannot be taken for granted.

In this situation laws and guidelines either from national governments or from EU-bodies are not enough to create a common debate. Civil society and institutions on local level have to interlink, to exchange experiences, to listen to each other and to develop their own methods to deal with the complexity of the Europe of today. Therefore intercultural competences must be an integral part of the formation for social and educational disseminators.

Integrating diversity

"Will an open dialogue on past and present developments (including the unpleasant ones), ideological tensions and different experiences be possible? Will we strive towards integration on equal footing? Will a "united" Europe finally be an open Europe where difference is valued and which is receptive to cultures all over the world?"[59].

These questions put by the editors of an intercultural learning kit give a hint to the leading questions during the process of developing the MOSAIC curriculum for "training for the trainers". While developing, presenting and piloting the **diversity-training** we learned ourselves how challenging it is, to work together under quite diverse circumstances, with different backgrounds and opinions and furthermore with little time to discuss with each other face to face. The work on the training became an intercultural experience itself. And it became quite clear, that the concept of culture does not fit to explain the individuality of each person participating in the work process. Not to mention other factors that can influence each person's way to be and to think, factors like gender, age and social background. When it comes to decision, it is always the individual being that makes up her or his own mind and it is not very helpful to think about one's personality only as a sum of various influences from outside.

So we decided, not to use the term intercultural training and to call the training **diversity training** instead because we wanted to make clear in the very beginning, that the competences that should be trained are mainly basic human skills. Such

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[59] Intercultural Learning T-Kit, Council of Europe and European Commission, 2003

skills should be the guidelines for every human being getting in contact with somebody else, no matter if the differences which surely occur in dealing with another person can be considered as of a cultural nature, as related to gender or due to different age or whatever else maybe.

Unlike most of the existing intercultural trainings we also decided, not to put our emphasis in defining what we mean by the term culture since this would mean to go deep into a theoretical debate about what culture really is and even if there is such a thing as culture. Neither we considered it helpful to give the type of generalizing advices such as "if you are in France, you have to have a good meal first before you can come to business", "if you are in Romania, you have to drink a palinca before you say goodbye", or "if you are in Germany you always have to be punctual." Fast food is a fast seller in France too, there certainly are Rumanians who hate to drink alcohol every time they have to part and in Germany even the trains are often late…. Going through the existing material we realized that some practices that are meant to overcome cultural barriers rather tend to intensify existing prejudices than to overcome them (*for example: Trainings - und Methodenhandbuch, Arbeitskreis Interkulturelles Lernen, DWW, 2001*). In trying to raise awareness about cultural differences some theories have a tendency to explain certain behaviours as culturally determined without taking into account, that there is not one country, nation or region that is based on a single, unique, fixed culture. So by constructing the diversity training we have chosen an approach that: deconstructs each kind of stigmatization, helps to raise empathy as the main base of understanding, develops the capacity of conflict tolerance to deal with different ways, interests and encourages self-reflection, rises the awareness of political and social conditions for conflicts and problems instead of seeing them as ethnic or cultural determined.

Usually intercultural trainings focus on the competences of the individual to deal with differences or to interact with other cultures. Reflections about the social and political background that, to a big part, are the bases for conflicts that are often centralized afterwards are not foreseen in traditional intercultural trainings. Our diversity training combines political education about the European Union, the countries of Europe or issues like migration and globalization with carefully selected practices developed by international professionals in the field of intercultural education.

The MOSAIC-Project gave the opportunity to develop and discuss the diversity training in six different countries and to pilot it as well at international level. So it can be considered as intent to construct a truly European product.