FONDAZIONE BRUNO KESSLER
MAGAZINE

Education in diversity

November 19, 2018

School is structurally a place of inequality: while European classrooms are increasingly diverse, the teacher population remains largely homogeneous and often lacking awareness about their own stereotypes and the multidimensional diversity of their students

One of **Europe**'s characteristics is the concept of **diversity**: there are 7000 languages ??spoken in the world, of which 225 in Europe, and of these 60 are minority languages, but this diversification is further increasing. Currently, 4% of the total EU population is made up of third-country nationals and population projections predict that by 2050 it will be around 20-40%: as early as 2020, 25% of students will have a migrant background.

Migration and globalization are causing social changes that create new opportunities and challenges for educational institutions. The growing number of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant children lead schools and teachers to reinvent daily practices and strategies to respond to new learning needs.

According to OECD PISA data, students who have a history of first and second generation migration have worse school outcomes than their peers, a disadvantage also shared by historical ethnic and linguistic minorities from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds: language problems and monocultural programs, can bring these students to drop out from school. The kids who cannot acquire knowledge and skills today, will be marginalized workers that will probably feed the so-called gig-economy tomorrow.

According to the "**Preparing Teachers for Diversity**" study, the school is structurally a place of inequality: while European classrooms are increasingly diverse, the teacher population remains largely homogeneous and often lacking awareness about their own stereotypes and the multidimensional diversity of their students: **stereotypes that create negative attitudes towards students with a different linguistic, cultural and religious background, as well as nurturing lower expectations, up to adopting discriminatory methods towards them**.

To meet these challenges it is necessary that education systems across Europe provide teachers with **intercultural skills**, to value and adapt to diversity and to be culturally self-aware, and **communication skills** to increase the ability to reflect on their beliefs and differences. In

addition, to overcome the language barriers of their students, teachers should be prepared for the language learning process and generally adopt inclusive instead of compensatory teaching approaches.

A contribution for teacher education to diversity comes from the Erasmus + Teaching in Diversity project. The partners, experts in minority rights, diversity, linguistic minorities, teaching strategy planning and media education, first identified the contents and then, designed the training, provided in pilot courses in the various countries of origin. Starting from this field test, the online version of the course, freely accessible on the project website, was created.

The online course consists of six modules:

1. diversity management at school,
2. minority rights,
3. non-discrimination and equality,
4. linguistic diversity,
5. religious diversity,
6. hate speech.

These topics are defined and set out. The regulatory framework, as well as some good practices and verification quizzes are indicated. The course has been integrated with a guide available in multiple languages – including Italian – and other materials.

The recent European Recommendation on Education of May 22, 2018 recalls common values and respect for human and minority rights to contrast populism, xenophobia, discrimination and radicalization and before listing the "key competences", recalls the need "to guarantee real equality of access to inclusive and quality education for all learners, including those from migrant backgrounds, or from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, those with special needs and those with disabilities [..] as an essential element to attain a more cohesive society".

School is the hope of society, that hope which, as St. Augustine says, "has two beautiful children: indignation and courage. Indignation for the reality of things; the courage to change them"

PERMALINK

https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/education-in-diversity/

RELATED MEDIA

- Teaching in Diversity (Erasmus+): http://www.teach-d.eu/

AUTHORS

- Eleonora Pantò