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Intercultural values education in Europe. A comparative analysis of Norwegian and Spanish reality

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Abstract

The various educational systems in Europe address the teaching of intercultural values in different ways. While in Spain, until recently, schooling in this area was conducted through Education for Citizenship and Human Rights, in Nordic countries the teaching of values is a cross-curricular affair. The aim of this study was to compare Norwegian students' cultural values with Spanish students' cultural values, in order to determine what influence the transmission route of these values has on student learning. The authors selected a sample of 781 Spanish students and 493 Norwegian students, drawn from the second year of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (Compulsory Secondary Education) and the ninth grade of high school, respectively. To collect the information, the authors used a questionnaire dealing with intercultural experiences and its Norwegian counterpart. Data analysis was conducted through T-statistic independent samples, using the SPSS statistical package, version 19.0. It was found that the Spanish education system transmits the intercultural values evaluated more effectively.

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1. Introduction

European society is going through a period of change. A snapshot of its citizens reveals that they hail from a host of countries. Immigration and emigration ensure that the continent is in a state of constant flux, with people coming from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

This situation is reflected in classrooms, where interculturalism (Tourriñan, 2008) and cultural hybridization (Gutierrez, 2005) take on special importance in the integrational education of pupils. European educational systems

are currently subject to the recommendations set out in the area of intercultural education by the Council of Europe (2002). Among such recommendations are those of fostering education in civic, democratic and pluralistic values.

Intercultural values make up part of the so-called democratic values (Tomé and Berrocal, 2013) and are defined as those founded on Human Rights, prominent among which are those values related to ethnic minorities, the rule of law and freedom of expression (Canetti-Nisim, 2004). As Oswald & Engelbrecht (2004) point out, education based on these values will foster attitudes, skills and concepts related to freedom, equality, democracy and individual responsibilities.

There is a theoretical consensus surrounding the matter of teaching intercultural values, shared by all European countries, in terms of accepting the Council of Europe's recommendations. The differences between nations emerge when they are put into practice. While some countries incorporate intercultural education into a distinct subject, there are others where this type of content is transmitted via a specific stand-alone subject. In some it is offered as an optional subject, while in others it is an obligatory part of the curriculum (Eurydice, 2005).

It is instructive to focus on the educational cycle and the countries investigated in this study: Spain and Norway provide a striking example of the Council of Europe's recommendations being implemented in very distinct ways.

Since the ratification of Spain's *Ley Orgánica de Educación* (LOE) in 2006, the teaching of intercultural values in Compulsory Secondary Education has fallen firmly within the subject entitled *Education for Citizenship and Human Rights (ECHR)*, as well as being treated in a cross-curricular way through other content (Tomé, 2012). This subject sets out to address democratic values directly through its contents and its objectives (MEC, 2004); it is not conceived as an alternative to religious studies, and nor does it threaten the teaching of values carried out in a cross-curricular way.

Specifically the intention is for pupils to acquire, among other things (LOE 2006):

- Awareness of their obligations towards others, as well as their rights, fostering the acquisition of values related to tolerance, cooperation and civic solidarity, with the aim of turning pupils into democratic citizens.
- Knowledge of inequalities between the sexes, fostering the rejection of discriminatory behaviours between men and women.
- Skills for peaceful conflict resolution in a way that avoids stereotypes and sexist and violent behaviour
- Awareness of cultural diversity, of their own and other people's history, paving the way to intercultural respect.

Citizenship education in Norway on the other hand is not offered as an independent subject in the cycle chosen for the focus of this study (Eurydice, 2005). Even so, Norwegian pupils benefit from teaching in such areas as Social Studies, Christianity, Religion and Ethics and Student Councils, where learning about values takes place in a cross-curricular fashion. These subjects are closely linked to the country's goal of civic education. Norwegian educational legislation sets out in its preamble that primary and lower secondary education should promote human equality and equality of opportunities, spiritual freedom and tolerance, environmental awareness and international collective responsibility (*Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa* 1998-11-27)

In the context of these different ways of putting the education of intercultural values into practice, the present study embarks from the hypothesis that there are also significant differences in the acquisition of such values when comparing Norwegian and Spanish schoolchildren.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The sample comprised 781 pupils in the second year of Compulsory Secondary Education drawn from eight schools in Melilla (Spain) and 493 ninth-year pupils from six primary state schools in the city of Tromsø (Norway) (48.43% female, 51.57% male, mean age = 13.91, SD= 0.29).

2.2. Procedure

The transmission of intercultural values in the two educational systems was measured by means of an ad hoc questionnaire entitled “Questionnaire on Intercultural Experiences”, produced in both Spanish and Norwegian versions. It consisted of a brief story placing the student in the context of an intercultural school situation and eleven questions designed to elicit the intercultural values that the participants would implement in the situation concerned. The questionnaire’s general measurement format exhibited a suitable degree of reliability ($\alpha= 0.73$) and a high degree of validity, the latter derived from a factorial analysis with which the authors obtained three factors that account for 90% of the variation and whose weights in the various underlying dimensions fundamentally coincide with the values of a previously validated and established category.

3. Results

In order to identify the significant differences in the acquisition of cultural values by children in the two educational systems, the statistical test known as the T-test for independent samples was carried out.

Prior to this test, Levene’s test was carried out with the aim of ascertaining the equality of the population variances. In accordance with these results the T-statistic for each variable was determined, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. T-test for independent samples

Values	Levene’s test sig	T-test for the equality of the score	
		t	Sig.
Giving help	0.01	- 8.41	0.00
Friendship	0.00	-3.38	0.00
Considerateness	0.72	-5.99	0.00
Adaptation	0.00	-5.92	0.00
Autonomy	0.00	8.40	0.00
Tolerance	0.03	2.76	0.00
Pleasure	0.00	-7.01	0.00
Equality	0.00	-2.10	0.03
Reflection	0.00	-4.66	0.00
Ecology	0.00	-9.69	0.00
Harmony	0.00	4.39	0.00

Given that the T-test significance is less than 0.05 for all the variables concerned, the authors view the initial hypothesis as confirmed and conclude that there are significant differences between pupils who take the ECHR course (the Spanish pupils) and the schoolchildren who do not (the Norwegian pupils) in the values of giving help, friendship, considerateness, adaptation, autonomy, tolerance, pleasure, equality, reflection, ecology and harmony.

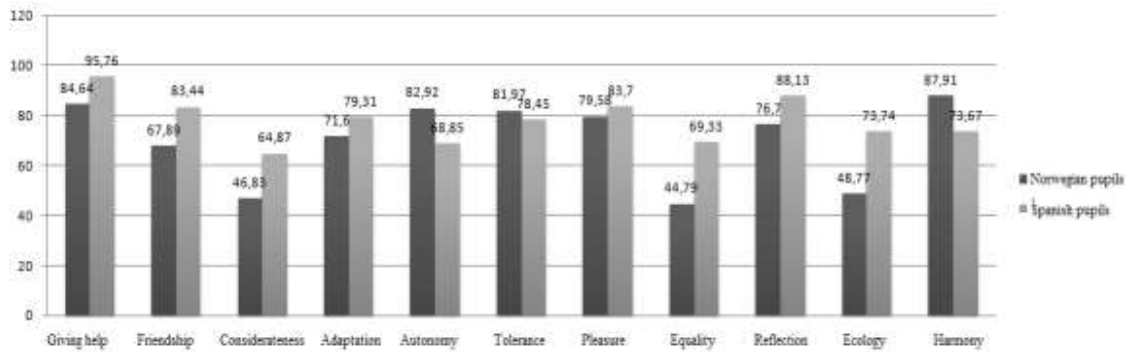


Fig 1. Differences in the acquisition of intercultural values between pupils who study ECHR (Spanish) and pupils who do not study ECHR (Norwegian)

In order to determine more accurately what these differences consisted of, the authors drew up contingency tables for each of the variables and the following results emerged (Fig. 1):

- For the help value, Norwegian pupils scored 88.64%, while their Spanish counterparts scored 95.76%.
- The friendship value saw a score of 67.89% for the Norwegian pupils and 83.44% for the Spanish ones.
- 46.83% of the Norwegian pupils exhibited the consideration value, compared to 64.87% of the Spanish pupils.
- The adaptation value was in evidence in 71.60% of the Norwegian pupils and 79.31% of the Spanish pupils.
- For the autonomy value the Norwegian pupils achieved a score of 82.92% and the Spanish pupils 68.85%.
- 81.97% of the Norwegian pupils have the tolerance value, compared to 78.45% of the Spanish pupils.
- The pleasure value is exhibited in 79.58% of the Norwegian pupils and 83.70% of their Spanish counterparts.
- The equality value is present in 44.79% of the Norwegian pupils and 69.33% of the Spanish pupils.
- The value of reflection is evident in 76.70% of the Norwegian pupils, versus 88.13% of the Spanish pupils.
- 48.77% of the Norwegian pupils exhibit the ecology value, as opposed to 73.74% of the Spanish pupils.
- The harmony value is present in 87.91% of the Norwegian pupils and in 73.67% of their Spanish counterparts.

4. Discussion

The results of this study tend to confirm the authors' belief in the validity of their working hypothesis. Significant differences ($p=0.05$) were found between the intercultural values of pupils studying the ECHR subject and those for whom ECHR does not form part of the curriculum.

Indeed, higher scores were observed in such intercultural values as giving help, friendship, considerateness, adaptation, pleasure, equality, reflection and ecology on the part of Spanish pupils; in other words, those that had been studying ECHR in Melilla. This fact may be a direct effect of the transmission of values promoted by the Spanish education system. The secondary schools of Melilla design the value-transmission parts of their curricular programmes in accordance with the content of the Spanish Constitution and the prevailing educational law. One of the fundamental principles underpinning the aforementioned law is that of transmitting and implementing values that foster personal freedom, responsibility, democratic citizenship, solidarity, tolerance, equality, respect and justice, as well as how these things help to overcome discrimination of all kinds (LOE, 2006: Art 1.c.). All these aspects are directly related to the intercultural values exhibited by the Spanish sample.

Moreover, as has become evident throughout this study, the ECHR subject has the teaching of intercultural values among its objectives, in line with the Council of Europe's recommendations. Specifically, the subject fosters the development of free and fully-rounded persons through the consolidation of self-esteem, personal dignity, liberty and responsibility. What it sets out to do is to mould citizens with their own standards: people who are respectful, participative and socially responsible, who know their rights, accept their obligations and develop civic habits enabling them to exercise citizenship in a responsible and effective manner.

However the results also indicate the superiority of Norwegian pupils, in other words those who do not study ECHR, in the intercultural values of autonomy, tolerance and harmony. This fact, taken in conjunction with the finding that more than half the children manifest the intercultural values of giving help, tolerance, adaptation, reflection, friendship, autonomy, pleasure and harmony, suggest that while it may not be as efficient as the Spanish education system, the Norwegian system does transmit intercultural values to its students.

In the Norwegian case the intercultural values were transmitted in a cross-curricular way via Social Studies, Christianity, Religion and Ethics and Student Councils. These subject areas govern the transmission of values in education in accordance with the prevailing Norwegian legislation. The aim is to propitiate moral and Christian-based education, the development of spiritual and physical capacities, practical knowledge that will enable children to become independent citizens, and the acquisition of values related to equality, freedom, tolerance, environmental awareness and collective responsibility (*Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa 1998-11-27*), aspects that are closely linked to the values of autonomy, tolerance and harmony, which interestingly achieved the highest scores among the Tromsø pupils. The manifestation of intercultural values among the Norwegian pupils concords with the democratic and inclusive paradigm promoted by the country's educational legislation. The legislation and curricular programmes in Norway place special emphasis on civic education based on democratic values, imparting such learning not only in a theoretical way but also through practical participation in schools (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006). Norwegian schools introduce their students to the ideals of equality, community and social justice with the aim of creating citizens who respect all social groups regardless of their economic status, sex, ethnic origin and/or their geographical location (Møller, 2006). Indeed, according to Arnesen & Lundahl (2006), young Norwegians are characterised by their possession of democratic values related to equality, immigrant rights and social engagement; and they are, together with schoolchildren from other Scandinavian countries, those who most firmly believe in the positive benefits of democracy for society.

5. Conclusions

By comparing the findings in the two countries it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

- The acquisition of intercultural values depends not only on the way in which they are transmitted in the educational system, because in our study regardless of the way they are acquired, they are reflected in the majority of students in both countries.
- The greatest significant differences between the pupils of the two countries emerged in the values of considerateness, equality and ecology.
- The majority of pupils in the Spanish and Norwegian samples have acquired the intercultural values of giving help, tolerance, equality, considerateness, adaptation, reflection, friendship, autonomy, pleasure, ecology and harmony.
- Giving help is the value that has been acquired most widely among both the Spanish and Norwegian samples.
- The least acquired values are considerateness in the Spanish sample and equality in the Norwegian sample.
- Pupils in the Spanish sample exhibit higher scores for the values of giving help, friendship, considerateness, adaptation, pleasure, equality, reflection and ecology when compared to the Norwegian sample.
- Norwegian pupils score higher than their Spanish counterparts in the values of autonomy, tolerance and harmony.
- The results from the samples lead the authors to conclude that education of intercultural values is more effective if it is done as an independent subject, rather than if it is conducted in a cross-curricular way through a range of subject areas. It is however also worth drawing attention to the influence of variables that may have impinged on the greater percentages scored by Spanish pupils that have not been evaluated in this study, such as familial education, social inclusion, the higher rate of immigration in Spain and so forth.

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