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The Importance of the Inclusion of Intercultural Diversity

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Abstract: The key issue is how to build an educational system that respects individual diversity while ensuring that diversity is included as much as possible in accordance with our conditions and capabilities. Searching for the structure of commitment, we wanted to diagnose the current state of variables that determine the current predictors that encourage and facilitate the inclusion of intercultural diversity of individuals as well as predictors that prevent equal approach for all cultures in the educational system. The interculturalism limited only on supporting or respecting diversity, will not yield significant results if it does not try to find the conditions for the development of this diversity. Social distance as a product of confrontation might have bad influence on the power of individual consciousness, an important prerequisite for intercultural identity, which is fundamentally built only by communication between two different parties - representatives of different cultural identities, who strive to become an intercultural community. This paper aims to present and point out the importance of the development of consciousness as a prerequisite for intercultural identity and inclusion of intercultural diversity, as well as to point out that it is necessary to communicate regardless of the differences among us, because here lies the beauty of an intercultural identity that is hidden in diversity.

Keywords: *communication; diversity; identity; inclusion; interculturalism.*

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1. Introduction

Given the fact that every one of us is an individual, it necessarily means that an identical pair of people does not exist and that we all differ not only in our culture and heritage, but also in our way of thinking, speaking and communication style. We differ in our willingness to change and progress, to constantly improve ourselves, to learn how to establish interpersonal relationships and communicate on a higher, more assertive level; that is; to change and expand our identity. In that sense, intercultural education, is a necessity of today's transitional society, a society that has found itself in front of many barriers and has closed its mind, whether out of fear of the unknown, or because of a lack of courage to face and to try to make contact with the differences that surround it, whether due to misunderstandings that occur in the communication itself and not being in a position to see the beauty of cultural diversity, strives to educate a more humane society. This society will shape a future where racism, discrimination, domination and misunderstandings will be unknown. This will enable any individual to communicate openly on a higher, more assertive level, without prejudice, as well as to interact with the environment where they live and work.

Nowadays, misunderstandings often occur in every form of communication, especially in sensitive communication such as intercultural. Consequently, we should strive to break down the barriers and open the mind of every individual, to communicate amicably and learn through this communication, to live in a harmonious society characterized by the diversity which helps us overcome the monotony and which brings the dynamics of coexistence. Therefore, we will try to point out the importance of this problem and the necessity to raise social awareness in our society or community, because communication should not be, and cannot be, reflected in the social distance and bounded by different barriers. At the same time, it is not a mere set of opinions expressed in words, movements, or gestures, but it stands for much more than that; it represents acknowledgment, respect and willingness to break down barriers and open the mind, primarily for comprehending and accepting our own culture and building our identity, so that we can generally respect others who are different from us about our notions.

2. Prerequisites for Open-mindedness towards Intercultural Identity

Cultures differ not only in content, but also in ubiquity, and, therefore, what is considered decent and acceptable behavior in one society, another society may perceive it differently, and that is why a greater distinction appears in the attitudes they take, because one should always have in mind that people and culture cannot identify with one another. Among other things, cultural diversity offers a wide range of possible ways of thinking and acting, and so we interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, and misunderstandings and errors can occur very quickly and can seriously jeopardize the newly established relationships (Dikić, 2017). For this reason, it is necessary for individuals to start with themselves, re-examine their abilities, and to try to understand and respect the differences they encounter. In this way, they will be able to value, be sensitive towards and accept inclusive diversity so that they can understand the basis of intercultural identity. That is, to achieve the necessary prerequisites for open-mindedness towards intercultural identity, they should have a broader view of the real existing situation.

Awareness of not only diversity, but also similarities that we selflessly share, possess, and nurture as human beings should help us stay informed, and provide us with greater knowledge which would be the basis for shaping our values, attitudes, behavior, and building stronger and better relationships with people (Piršl, 2011). The problem of valuation is, therefore, closely tied to human nature.

Human beings are beings of value who take attitudes towards values by starting from what surrounds them, so that, based on these formed attitudes and criteria, they can evaluate, measure and direct their actions, they can distinguish the positive from the negative, the humane from the inhumane (Bedeković, 2018, p. 109).

Nowadays, diversity as well as creativity and innovation are the main reasons for misunderstandings and conflicts where inequality, discrimination and segregation prevail. This means that misunderstandings at that level can be hazardous for human dignity and the welfare of society. Therefore, respect and acceptance of cultural diversity are necessary, fundamental values, and the intercultural community should be based on them in order to achieve solidarity and strengthen social cohesion, which brings even greater intercultural value (Piršl, 2011). Based on what has been said, the very notion of value must be perceived in the context of the relationship between man and society, where each historical period inherits certain values that are subject to social evaluation, after which they are accepted, rejected, or

changed. In that sense, values cannot be considered permanent, immutable categories, but they, much like society, are subject to change (Bedeković, 2018, p. 109). Values are adopted through socialization, which means that their formation requires the mediation of society and the individual, that is, certain agents of socialization must act, thereby transmitting social norms and standards with certain modifications that are conditioned by the individual actions of the agents. The very ability to analyze and argue is a prerequisite for tolerant communication (Jevtić, 2012).

The level of acceptance of cultural values particularly refers to young people, and it depends on their education, predispositions, and ability to actively participate in a democratic society. This is done by relying on the experience acquired in a democratically oriented society, in order to strengthen and build intercultural relationships (Bedeković, 2018). The adoption of these said values depends, among other things, on the implementation of intercultural education in its practice, whereby the adoption of fundamental values of interculturalism should contribute to education and the development of certain traits. These traits include empathy, solidarity, tolerance, empowerment of coexistence of different cultures and their communication, as well as the fight against all forms of discrimination, the recognition of rights, fight against stereotypes and prejudice, and the elimination of ethnocentrism, nationalism and xenophobia (Bedeković, 2018, p. 109-111). Cultural sensitivity, or cross-cultural sensitivity, refers to tolerance and respect, that is, it refers to sensitivity to norms and rules of other cultures. Cultural sensitivity is a set of knowledge and skills that help us understand and learn about other cultures that are different from our own. When interacting with different cultures, people have a tendency to regard their own social norms, customs, or values as more valuable or correct than the attitudes, norms and values of others. Cultural sensitivity, therefore, represents the rejection of such inclinations in favor of deeper understanding, respect, and compassion, with a tendency to accept those who are different without implicitly or explicitly imposing values and norms of one's own culture (Žegarac et al., 2016).

Even though cultural transmission is a conscious and intentional process, there are cases where this transcultural process of transmitting certain norms and attitudes is performed on an unconscious level, which are often expressed through covert alternative actions that are disguised as symbolic intention. Consequently, it appears that parents often demand from their children to express certain types of behavior, but these imposed patterns of behavior do not harmonize with those family norms in a wider

social community. With the help of literature, music, or through spontaneous gatherings in the park, children adopt and implement some patterns formed from the wider community into their own value system, the very patterns that are mapped out according to social conventions on ethnicity (Coffee, 2008). Cultural differences play a role in everyday life and are reflected in the behavior of students and teachers who bring to school their cultural models from their own community. If we do not talk about education, and if we look at culture objectively, we then realize that culture is a set of institutional, political and historical circumstances which maintain a certain community where people constantly interact with each other (Bennett, 2009).

However, such an understanding neglects the criterion of humanity, which stems from the fact that human beings are the most important initiators of not only their own but also society's development, so we should strive for a society where productivity and acquired knowledge are the most important criteria for evaluation. That is why it is necessary to change the existing hierarchy of values. This type of process is developing at different rates in different countries, because it largely depends on economic power and scientific achievements, but mostly on the current and prevailing cultural pattern. Respect for human rights is based on this pattern. The goal of all this is to create a society where each individual has equal rights and opportunities regardless of individual differences, where inclusion is a proper solution (Cvetko et al., 2000). In this society, inclusion is viewed exclusively as a process of involving everyone in society, regardless of their cultural identity. This will be discussed further in the paper.

Inclusion should become the core of a multicultural society, with the only difference being that the inclusion of intercultural diversity is accepted. Isolation and social distance do not only represent the isolation and distancing of the majority, but also of the minority, as a defense mechanism against attempted harm, discrimination or any labeling. On the other hand, it can represent resistance of the non-dominant against the majority, in the sense that they do not want to be accepted, for the same reason that they themselves do not accept those who are different. Thus, due to migrations, it is not uncommon to hear and read in the mass media that migrants attack their neighbors, that they illegally inhabit abandoned houses, that they provoke hate speech against others on national and religious grounds, etc. This reinforces the fact that the majority, especially young people who are still searching for themselves and their identity, out of revolt, dissatisfaction, protective behavior or ignorance, behave almost identically towards those migrants. The only difference is that there are always those who are

innocent, who are put in the same group and who cannot express themselves, which is not really the goal and mission of inclusion. Inclusion means involving, relying on one another, it doesn't involve any kind of superiority or forcing anyone to fit into the social mass.

Thereby, the prerequisites for open-mindedness towards intercultural identity are achieved, without which it would not be possible to build such a sensitive identity, that is, develop the personality and bridge the gap. If one closes their mind and doesn't accept that intercultural values, sensitivity and inclusion exist, if one diminishes their significance and power, this will lead to social distance as a barrier, which is actually a prerequisite for alienation and formation of a culture gap withing the community to which we belong. Such a gap contributes to the greater instability of one society, which easily falls under the influence of others and easily loses its identity, the identity which, in that case, is not even built.

These realized preconditions in the form of positive and proper intercultural values, sensitivity and inclusion of diversity lead not only to the condition for identification, but also to the destruction of social distance. Closing one's mind before the differences is equal to a utopian society, and in that way the dynamics that separates society from all other living communities that exist on planet Earth is lost. Human beings, as the only rational humane beings must not close their minds, but should strive to expand and deepen their natural intelligence, educate themselves, understand the importance of dialogue, and base their awareness of intercultural communication on true, positive and socio-empathic norms and principles, and to constantly work on them. Hence, it can be said, human beings identified themselves without losing their own *I,* which shows that the social distance does not exist, and that the barriers *I-You, We-They* do not actually exist, and that social community grows into an intercultural one in its sociological and ethnic definition.

To what extent the relationship will be of good quality depends on the perception and comprehension of the feelings, thoughts and attitudes of people who think differently and whose opinion is formed by their specific lifestyle. If we attribute the task of helping an individual to get to know themselves to intercultural upbringing and education, while nurturing the true sense of self, then education cannot but lead to recognizing and valuing diversity, as well as to building interpersonal relationships where being different is accepted as a principle of unity and diversity. In that sense, intercultural education cannot be accomplished unless it enables each subject or group to affirm their own identity. It is the consciousness of the

significance of one's own culture that allows one to recognize diversity. Confirmation of the rights and values of different cultures does not exclude, but rather necessitates the recognition of diversity and their respect for the benefit of society and communities.

3. Conclusion

It is inevitable that the process of globalization is increasingly affecting the education of younger generations, the educator and the methods they use, as well as students in that learning process. In order for the process of multicultural education to be successful, there needs to exist a harmonious relationship between all factors of education: environment, activities and inherited traits. An individual cannot develop a multicultural, democratic world view without considering the environment and the influence it inevitably has on the educational process, without the individual's interest in their educational progress, and it is not possible to accomplish the goal the learning process strives for without a critical review of the hereditary factor. It is clear that human beings as individuals are not born with the qualities and abilities that make up their humanity. Every individual, through development, recognizes and adopts multicultural values. They familiarize themselves with and adopt other people's attitudes, they develop interests and abilities that will help them establish a better relationship with other individuals in a common or different society.

A pluralistically educated person will know how to resist any conservation and isolation in society at any time, realizing that humanity functions best in a democratic way, with mutual respect and esteem for diversity among equal members of a society.

Essentially, we are not predisposed to being evil and prone to judging, setting barriers, closing our minds; that is why it is necessary to abandon the stereotypical way of thinking, it is necessary for all people to come out of isolation, social distance they, as society, created for themselves, and to see the world in its true color and diversity. Only then would they realize that multiculturalism is the beauty of this world. If everyone were ready to take a step forward and establish interpersonal relationships with the differences they encounter daily, the world would become the most beautiful cultural oasis.

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