School Failure Deterrence Policies in Respect of National and Social Differences towards Interculturalism Promotion

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The continuously developing multicultural European community generates a school in which, besides other student differences, namely social and economic, national differences are being accumulated leading to an intrinsic school and learning environment. Education sociology along with its tools and theories is continuously seeking to explain students' school failure. Bernstein, Bourdieu and Boudon's theories focus on sociology and inequalities theory. In this respect, the two formerly mentioned use language and family cultural capital as a basis on which they explain student school failure, whereas the latter contends that the number of students extending their school life is ongoing. However, even today, there are prominent school inequalities among students, especially between native and foreign ones. Based on these analyses, intercultural education scholars strongly put forward their belief that intercultural education and respect towards all students' rights are the only solution and, at the same time, the only objective that can be necessarily prominent in education across Europe. Taking into consideration the crisis in the capitalist economy and the cultural values of Europe which are continuously intensified in the

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contemporary post-modern society, education sociology is invited to spot the causes and barriers to all students' school integration, to successfully defend interculturalism so that inequalities in the school environment are eventually mitigated.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inequalities among different social groups [1] have not been eliminated as a result of the massive time extension of school life, being a demand of modern society. On the contrary, they have become more painful for those directly experiencing them and, consequently, "darker" for those trying to analyse them. The differentiation of orientations in Secondary Education has multiplied access to different training levels even though they do not share the same value regarding labour market or possibilities of post-secondary training.

Thus, despite the lower number of young people having completed schooling without further training has decreased significantly compared to the past, the percentage of this group is still at high levels. Upon completion of compulsory education, it is still difficult for a number of students to comprehend the content of texts, meaning that struggling against illiteracy remains a reality. Moreover, it is realised that degrees and certificates do not definitely lead to a position in the labour market. This situation is even harder for the young from underprivileged socio-cultural strata, including the young immigrants who are stigmatised by school failure and, consequently, more exposed to difficulties arising when trying their social integration [2].

The ongoing settlement of immigrants in Western Europe, especially following 1989 and the end of the "cold war", the decay and rise of nationalism, intolerance and racism question the role of school itself and compose a moral dilemma. The major question lies in the type of individual that should be formed: how school can contribute to students' acquiring experience regardless of their national, social, cultural, religious identity [3]. Besides, the issue of educational inequalities is anew highlighted, making the implementation of a unified curriculum about the most significant elements of a common culture even more complicated [4]. Thus, unless conditions for the immigrants' social integration into the education system are created, social inequalities are maximised because children and adolescents are deprived of the right to education and,

consequently, to opportunity structures for their personal and professional development. Therefore, rescheduling the educational policy is mandatory so that both natives and immigrants learn to co-exist within an evolutionary multicultural environment.

The present study aims to scrutinise school failure, to detect its causes, in sociological terms, and to make clear the way in which the modern European society should take action to overcome them, generally, and in particular in the case of foreign immigrant students.

In this respect, school failure is primarily being analysed by illustrating its causes through the lens of sociology of education scholars and most importantly its relation to language. The next step is to explain national differences and interculturalism is proposed as a means of taking action within the school community, on the one hand, and the broader society, on the other, so that all school and social inequalities are combated.

2. SCHOOL FAILURE AND SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Throughout the '60s when the first groups of the school population were massive, the role of knowledge is of utmost importance in the formation of post-industrial society. In this respect, education was regarded as a "productive investment" putting forward the culture of "human capital". The more modern a society is the stronger is the need to activate all of its talents available across all social strata, securing this way a powerful social mobility.

Given that the content and structure of contemporary education systems are scrutinised, it is important to refer to previous educational researches regarding the effectiveness of education. Throughout this period a number of researches were conducted in some industrial countries. The most important of all was Colleman's report published in the USA in 1966. Besides, reference should be made to those conducted by the National Institute for Demographic Studies in France and by OECD

along with those conducted in England. All of them questioned the idea according to which spreading education systems effectuates a democratic access to education. It is obvious that spreading education systems, namely the legalised reinforcement of the right to education, is insufficient. On the contrary, re-approaching issues tied to the content of education in evolutionary conditions defined by the economic, social and cultural framework is mandatory. Therefore, certain variables such as the impact of geographical and social environment, family models as well as the manner of inculcating cultural models, different family belief systems and linguistic codes become apropos [2]. Consequently, the basic standpoints of functionalistic education crumbled, as it received severe criticism.

The "universal" character of school culture, that is, its particular "objective" or rational character was discredited. An existing culture that could include the truth of the world, as implied in functionalistic education, was questioned. According to the constructivist perspective, school culture established the legalisation of a particular cultural perspective [5]. Curricula and school cultures are, therefore, a series of establishments, while knowledge cannot be distinguished from their social qualities [6].

The issue of inequalities monopolised attention in the sociology of education. References [7,8] along with the theories of [9] are prominent in the sociology of inequalities, yet with radically different interpretations. References [7] and [8] conclude the absent democratisation of education, while [9] underlines the increasing percentage of lower social strata school integration and concludes on the relevant opportunities enhancement for individuals depending on their social class. Despite the differences of these studies, both of them significantly obfuscate the individuals' perception and confidence in the alleged school justice or its meritocratic possibilities.

In particular, the studies conducted by Bourdieu [10] comprised the so-called sociology of education. These analyses are adequately well-known, thus, reference to them is rather brief. The school participates in the legalisation of status quo by practising a sort of "symbolic violence" that is by imposing the normative and value system of the dominant class. Thus, the dominant political and social system is legalised and naturalised by the curricula and educational

practices. The school culture is that of the dominant social class imposed on the entire society as a form of universal and objective knowledge. Based on transformation processes, the school assimilates the culture of the dominant social classes; it blankets the social nature of this culture and eventually rejects it by undermining the other social groups' culture.

School is correlated with the individual course, social structure and cultural legitimacy reproduction. The operation of such an education system in terms of school inequalities generation is realised through accumulating different forms of capital, particularly the manner by which it transforms the socio-economic capital into the cultural one.

Sociology of educational inequalities seems to increasingly grab scholars' interest. Throughout the '80s, French sociology is more interested in the heterogeneity of school institutes and in the difference among them in terms of school performance [11]. School is approached in different ways. It is noteworthy that students' orientation does not solely depend on social inequalities, since the fluctuations among different schools are not negligible [12]. Other researches tend to compare different schools with common characteristics, yet different outcomes, underlying the role of school framework and its "climate" [13]. Other studies consider schools as autonomous organisations and some others pinpoint school impact on students' socialisation by analysing the relationship among different types of social relations, types of authority and the educational aspects of colleges [14]. To better understand the relationship between student and knowledge, the issues of social class, in connection (even) with the evolution of the labour market, school system and cultural forms should be taken into consideration. In this respect, when analysing the relation between students and acquired knowledge (e.g. in technical schools), unemployment, temporary work, new forms of adult life, discussions about the value of work should be taken into consideration. There is lurking risk, of course, in ignoring important analysis facts, necessary to understand the relation between students and acquired knowledge in technical schools, in case one is restrained to explore the social position only.

It is common knowledge that throughout the '60s and '70s, the theories of reproduction as well as those inspired by the former, provided an

interpretation of school failure in terms of social origin. Nonetheless, it is difficult to understand the reason why a certain number of children from underprivileged social strata succeed in school as well as why a certain number of children from privileged social strata fail. These sociological theories do not study knowledge altogether. They provide an interpretation in terms of social choice (social standpoints relevant to entering and completing the school system), yet ignoring the fact that a student's school life is characterised on the basis of assessing their acquired knowledge and skills. They study knowledge in terms of an inherited cultural capital, which is internalised, without reference to the activities by which the individual appropriates knowledge (which is completely different from inheriting or internalising a capital). What is more, they put forward the issue of cost and benefit in terms of social position and not in terms of investment or cognitive success or failure [15].

Most analyses in the sociology of education indicate the transition from school macro sociological analyses to those referring to active individuals' practices and inner processes taking place inside the classroom [12,16]. These studies have underlined the rise of other sociological paradigms since the '60s.

Moreover, several empirical studies conducted within schools and classrooms were massively inspired by reproduction theories throughout the '70s. Nowadays, they are supported by the "constructivist" paradigm of symbolic interaction and sociological phenomenology. Yet, regardless of the inspiring theoretical standpoints, they widely focus on social representations, on educators' evaluations, assessments and orientation, on the teacher-student interaction, on various ways of infliction, negotiation or transgression of rules and school life routine. Studies inspired by the sociology of interaction unveil the conflicts within classrooms and the dominant stereotypes while they denounce the idea of socialisation achieved through mere identification, that is, the illusion according to which children are "hypnotised" by the teacher, the idea that the active subject is passive. They regard the individual as having their own conservation sources while they perceive socialisation as a process that takes place within multiple interactions in which the active individual is able to organise their individuality.

Despite the fact that these studies shed light on whatever happens inside the school, they reveal only a few things relevant to individual or social processes that either allow, or are in favor of, or, on the contrary impede knowledge assimilation for students who belong to different social environments.

Some authors regard the issue of knowledge as being the epicenter of sociology of education, tied to the construction of an image about the subject, their relation to their past and future, to their family and future placement in society. This is all about an association with knowledge which articulates various associations with the world and not solely the representation of knowledge [15]. This type of knowledge is correlated with other major issues deriving from a student's school story, namely the problem of school failure.

On the one hand, school failure is a social phenomenon, particularly tied to certain social groups. On the other hand, it is a condition that characterises an individual throughout their life course. Today, it is important to develop deep understanding about school failure tied to people that massively belong to certain social groups. Any explanation should concurrently take into consideration the correlation between failure and social origin, not merely on the basis of noted sociological theories but on the basis of the student – knowledge relation.

School failure is a gradually constructed condition, emanating from other conditions, practices, events and coincidences. It is about the individual's school story but not irrelevant to their entire story. In cannot be assumed that school failure is interpreted only on the basis of a student's social origin considering that such a condition is the student's almost inevitable fate. A person's school failure can be interpreted based on the entire number of incidents throughout their story. A person's story is not unfolded within a social void. On the contrary, it is interwoven with the relation to other human beings, their family members and it is constructed within social frameworks established on social relations. In this respect, an individual's school story is unique and, at the same time, social. The individual is not obviously an object, but rather a subject and they, therefore, shape meanings and take action.

Each person renders certain meanings to their existence, to what happens to them and the conditions they find themselves in the society and the broader world. Reference should be made to the student, whose school life is not

considered merely as a course, but rather as a whole of experiences which are interpretable and meaningful. Therefore, studying a student's school life in terms of school and social standpoints is not enough. On the contrary, it is important to understand it from the inside, as a student's meaningful experience.

3. SCHOOL AND LANGUAGE AS INDICATORS OF INEQUALITIES AND SEPARATION

The linguistic factor undoubtedly reflects differences and inequalities of the school culture in the sense that there is a connection between linguistic and school achievement. Furthermore, language is part of the students' cultural capital which is directly related to school language along with students' success or failure in it.

Their association with school and school life very often agrees with the connection between students and knowledge as well as the manner in which they interpret school conditions, which eventually differentiate students among each other. Thus, students having difficulties in school value the kind of knowledge which allows them to "address" their everyday life conditions, school conditions included. The type of work required to learn is actually confined in school orders and compliance with school regulations about their behavior. They consider school to be irrelevant from learning, yet it is regarded as a deterrent in their school course, that is, the difficulty "to pass" the class and have a "good job" afterwards [17].

The association with knowledge is one with the world and symbolic systems, but most of all, with language. Linguistic practices, particularly those referring to the culture of writing, are undoubtedly one of the fields in which the connection between the world and the self is constructed. In this respect, studies conducted by Lahire [18] on school failure in the primary school indicate that language (as well as knowledge) is a practice ignored in this sense by students with learning difficulties, who, in their majority come from lower social strata. This is the point from which their difficulties and resistance against special school activities within the culture of writing derive, as they are required to be aware of and significantly transform their association with language and the world. The whole of these transformations is rarely the subject of teaching aiming at supporting those students who were deprived of support in their family socialisation. Consequently, they were not able to construct

such an association with language, the world and themselves.

Linguistic practices, especially those tied to the culture of writing establish the field in which such an association with the world and the self is constructed. Generally, in primary school the activity of writing cannot be limited to communication or word by word narration. It is mostly a tool of thinking, a means of intellectual transformation of ourselves and our relation to the world, a tool used by the subject to construct the knowledge acquired, since they wish to escape from the rational of experience and the practical association with immediate conditions. Students with difficulties are not able to construct and process such an association with language, the world and themselves.

School culture is not "neutral" since it reflects the allocation, that is, the distribution of authority in the society. Reference [19] primarily developed this standpoint. On the one hand, social conditions are correlated to the origin of different cultural skills, mainly of linguistic nature, which interprets unequal abilities of elimination. On the other hand, the culture transferred from school, through the codification of school knowledge, is in favor of students from privileged social strata. It is widely known that [19] reveals two types of linguistic codes in relation to the two major social positions. These two codes question cultural neutrality attributed to school, in which teachers use a "processed" code, whereas children of the labor class use a "limited" code. As a consequence, the latter experience a rupture between their family environment and schooling. This is a tremendously deep conflict, which the author regards as an unfolding in terms of meanings and not just in terms of linguistic forms.

Not all scholars support the standpoints of [19]. As many linguists, [20] also claims that the codes indicated by [19] establish differences among dialects which are not correlated to the basic linguistic function or the intrinsic language and that popular language is also processed similar to that of the upper social strata. These studies enfeeble confidence in school cultural neutrality. Indeed, the analyses of [19] revealed an implied coherence between school culture and some students' social skills.

Following the train of thought of the previous scholars, [18] contends that students from lower social strata are indeed aware of the fact that school knowledge will not allow them to

"confront" their everyday life conditions, school conditions included. The knowledge often identified with these conditions does not value any other kind of knowledge. The work required to be done by these students is confined in school orders and compliance with proper conduct regulations.

The difficulties encountered by children from underprivileged social environments are based on access to written language, in particular the culture of writing. Researchers believe that the written language is not acquired through exercises and mechanistic interventions, but it rather presupposes an explicit perception of the meaning of reading by the student [18].

It is common knowledge that the child reacts to language of its surrounding environment and probably understands it from its first year of life. Several researches also indicate that the most significant factor for the child's progress in learning this language is whether it responds or not to interventions, rather than the quality of language of the surrounding environment or its learning willingness. This means that it is very important to build dialogues with the child, as this allows it to deal with linguistic contents, that is, with realities transferred through language.

The family environment acts as a mediator between the child and reality, while acquiring the spoken language. However, this is not the case with written language, which appears much later when the child confronts various events that happen around it and which do not merely derive from the contact with its parents. When children from underprivileged social strata abstain from the culture of writing, it is not due to the fact that they are not aware of it, but simply because they regard this culture as the compulsory course in order to access valued professions. It could be said that in this sense this culture is considered to be a means of promotion. Children from underprivileged social environments do not regard education as a means of social rise. They both realise and accept the effects of their rejection while they assume social success in terms of material security and comfort, a fact not often addressed by children from privileged social environments, as they regard it in terms of awakening and personal affirmation [18].

Therefore, should linguistic achievement be differentiated among students from lower social strata, to which foreign and immigrant students undoubtedly belong, then this differentiation will be present later in their learning development and, consequently, in this case, in the increasing educational inequalities.

4. ETHNIC DIFFERENCES AND SEPARATION AT SCHOOL

Focus is placed on the issue of ethnicity which is concerned with understanding the processes of ethnic discrimination at school, as a total of social contradictions, detected in that area, are articulated in ethnic forms. According to various intellectual traditions, the definitions of ethnicity are either in favor of a sense of belonging to a collectivity or the existence of a linguistic community. Nonetheless, both ethnicity and race withhold the idea that they include a fundamental entity, almost natural, and therefore, unchangeable, which consists of a special culture, a special language and a special psychology [21]. According to the classical perception, ethnicity pertains to a population which is under reproduction in terms of biology, sharing values, beliefs and basic cultural institutions, speaking the same language and having the same social organisation. However, ethnicity should not be regarded as isolated, as it consists of an ethnic space and is defined and understood within a historical perception. The existence and conservation of ethnic groups do not depend on differences tied to cultural forms. Ethnic discontinuities can possibly separate populations not differentiated in terms of language, religion, economic activity or customs, while intense cultural differences among groups, not regarded as ethnic entities, are discovered [22].

An ethnic group is considered disadvantageous in relation to society, member of which is the observer, that is, the one having the authority to name and define the others. This concept is established at a time period during which there is a rise of the nationalistic movement in Europe and nation is the reference point. Ethnicity forms a sort of a nation with deficits, as it lacks the political institutions, the characters of "civilisation", which determine the characteristics of the people – nation. In this sense, the concept of the nation lies in the so-called "civilised" Western states, the people of the West, being the subject of a historical fate, while the concept of ethnicity refers to a number of characteristics tied to an absent civilisation or to a cultural delay useful to indicate the dominant populations or dominated minorities, and, therefore, it implies insufficiency [21].

During the historic period when Europe dominates the rest of the world, ethnic definitions are familiarised with political and scientific discourse. Europe wishes to monitor and administrate local populations that are subjected to its sovereign. In this way, the colonial policy proceeds to classification, separation and enclosure of local populations within racial, territorial and cultural definitions. Colonisation often reproduced definitions and ethnic classifications through inventing arbitrary ethnic names, geographical maps and the establishment of maps useful for political and administrative purposes [23].

Even though ethnicity is not the remnant or the reoccurrence of some ancestral past or some traditional culture, the populations of colonies eventually internalised the colonisers' "ethnic gaze" and formed races (to which they belonged) since the Europeans claimed that the Africans belonged to races [24]. One of the most important contributions to the critical review about ethnicity is that of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrick Barth. The texts included in his edited volume, focus on studying the connection between culture and ethnicity through researches conducted in different social frameworks while they underline the fact that cultural similarities and differences are socially organised. This is also pinpointed by the subtitle of this edited volume "the social organisation of cultural difference" [25]. According to him, ethnicities are mainly groups of classification and definition adopted by people themselves. Ethnicity is primarily a category, just like race, a model of cognitive classification which is useful to discriminate others – sometimes to stigmatise them and other times for their self-utilisation. The human race is not an objective reality based on biological traits, but rather a product of social categorisation in a specific historical and cultural framework [22]. In a similar vein, ethnicity is, therefore, a socially constructed product and not an objective classification emanating from cultural facts.

According to Barth [25], the ethnic identity cannot be understood through its cultural content. It is rather a phenomenon tied to the construction of limits among different ethnic groups [25]. On the basis of this standpoint, an ethnic group is not defined by its cultural content, but by the limits, through which, its members and non-members perceive themselves in a subjective manner. Classification is always realised through the subjective choice (all in all unconscious) with

criteria targeting the discrimination of ethnic groups. Ethnic borders are "semantic barriers", that is, social categories and classification systems defining both "self" and the "others", as well as the "self" in contrast to the "others" without being based on "objective" cultural characteristics, but rather on the comparison to the "foreigners" and their eventual preclusion. The ethnic belonging is not a matter of co-existence, but it pertains to social representation and a belief which is inferred by some social dynamics, mainly the national political organisation and the national political life. This belief always develops against the "others", who are regarded as different and lesser due to this difference [26].

Ethnicity is a social fact and it indicates the generation and conservation of communities established upon distinctive references and beliefs which they transform some cultural, natural or other characteristics into symbols of ethnic identity. These characteristics are not the qualities of a population, but rather the qualities of a discrimination whose social effects vary significantly depending on societies, time and place. Barth rejects the traditional conception of ethnicity and suggests it be replaced through a relational perspective. Ethnicity is not defined through an objective cultural peculiarity, but through its social and political construction, the meaningfulness of interactions of active individuals and, consequently, it must be analysed in terms of relations and processes. Ethnic partitions, even though they are cultural arbitraries, are rendered a particularly social effectiveness and must be understood both through a historical perspective, in terms of relations among group or collectivity members, and through their relations to other group or collectivity members.

A certain social group, a population or a collectivity can potentially vindicate an ethnicity. Such a vindication refers to utilising and/or deteriorating of particular, recognisable cultural characteristics, to assimilating and internalising of the ethnic definition, to refuting stigma or even to inventing an ethnic identity, as well as to ethnicising life conditions of a dominated, marginalised, precluded or stigmatised minority. The use of the term "ethnicisation" allows the perception of time dimensions and the dynamic character of ethnicity. In other words, it allows a deep understanding of the fact that it is obligatorily generated within a certain framework through contacts and social relations.

Ethnicisation is not a process of recognition or invention of a cultural difference, but rather a process of classification [27].

In many cases, cancelling of the previous ethnic identity and adopting the ethnic identity of the natives or other popular ethnic identities [27] is a strategy to avoid social stigma or marginalisation. Thus, it is the immigrant or refugee's personal choice in order to facilitate their social integration without refutations or ruptures. Inventing origin as well as assimilating signs or symbols referring to an alleged authentic culture is tied to an identity strategic defense against stigmatisation and exclusion, as well as rights deprivation, the victims of which are immigrant minorities. A characteristic example is the invention of the common identity black by minorities of different geographical origin in Great Britain. It is about a social and political concept, as it underlines the social conditions of former or recent immigrants being the subject of discriminations [28,29]. In France, processing the culture of beur (among second generation Arabic populations) refers to a cultural construction that actually transgresses the ethnic cultural references of the countries of origin. The beur movement refuses to assimilate in the dominant culture, as well as the discrimination tied to the culture of origin and vindicate a double identity French/European and Arabic [30,31].

When studying the differentiation of ethnic minorities and their negative perception and social stigmatisation, it is also worth studying the interaction between the ethnic definitions "They" – "We". In particular, ethnic beliefs within a society are associated with the whole of social dynamics, as these dynamics of the ethnic definitions "They" – "We" are established across the social structure, in a form of relation by which individuals and groups are defined and recognised as "natural" or different. The others are usually the "ethnic". It is about cultures or groups, which having been removed from the social or cultural majority, are perceived as different, peculiar, marginalised, or simply non-consistent with the ethnic norm. Dominant groups have authority and are considered important sources of practices and symbolic regulations in all sectors of the state mechanism, whereas the dominated groups are either subjected to and compromise with the former or not. Thus, the dominant social class, in political terms, defines the operation of institutions by actually imposing its values. It is realised that both the dominated and dominant ones interpret

their position in ethnic terms. In other words, they use different categories to give meaning to their behaviors and their mutual relationships, whereas the same contradiction was previously considered one of class. Social scientists who have analysed the social production of the foreigner underline the fact that during the '70s the foreigner (in one country) was not perceived as the ethnic foreigner, but the poor individual and that the stigma of otherness has been gradually highlighted to the foreigner, the immigrant. Ethnic processes are not tied to the diversity of cultures and ethnic pluralism, but to the manner by which populations are managed as they are perceived as foreigners within societies and are pushed off the space of exchanges. Reference [32] has analysed the social production of the foreigner in France and has claimed that extreme poverty could be perceived as an ethnic-political difference [32].

In terms of differentiating characteristic, it should be made clear that they are not cultural or racial, but mostly behavioral and they are organised around the concept of the "uncivilised" denoting a whole of behaviors of a population characterised in this way. This is not an insignificant concept and refers to behaviors pertaining to interactions of people in towns as well as the classic gap between the "savage" and the "civilised". This separation of the social world unveils a process of establishing boundaries between "They" and "We" along with the symbolic significance of schooling in this process.

To understand the role of ethnic definitions "They" – "We" within school it should be taken into consideration that ethnic processes work as a catalyst to teachers and students' school experience and lead their interpretation as regards this experience. The question lies as to whether the paradigm of ethnicity could contribute to reading social phenomena, that is, understanding school interactions, since the entire school contradictions within the school environment are articulated in ethnic forms. These contradictions are prominent in schools which students mostly from lower social strata attend (immigrants or not). The interactions of all the school population (students, parents and teachers) in the school space along with the influence of practices and conditions to vindicate or render an ethnic position to people are the focal point. The structures, forms and contents of education (curricula, teaching material and courses) reflect the ethnic domination given that the school has traditionally played a crucial role

to developing a culturally homogeneous ethnic identity through language, culture and the narration of history.

Ethnic processes are indissolubly associated with national history and the ethnic beliefs socially engraved are those of a historic-political nature. An ethnic group is formed through social interactions and shapes cultural peculiarities, highlighting in this way the need for identity affirmation. Ethnic processes that take place within school affect and lead both teachers and students' school experience. Thus, the category ethnicity can be perceived as one which interprets the cultural distance between school and students from popular environments (either of immigrant origin or not) who are less familiarised with the school culture. In this sense, responsibilities are rendered to the "nature" or "culture" of these students who experience school failure, while other forms of interpreting the distance between school culture and them are not suggested. In terms of sociology of reproduction the dominant symbolic universe is monitored by the dominant groups of society, reflecting their interests, legalising their privileges and contributing to their conservation. This standpoint is also supported by [8] in their work "La reproduction". In their essay they implement the theory of symbolic violence to the school institution. According to them, the role of school is to engrave the cultural arbitrariness of the dominant groups, mainly their norms of evaluation, by transferring "neutral" knowledge [8].

Immigrant young people do not always feel that they are favored by the citizens' society, as school exclusion – on a school level - along with their discrimination in accessing to job opportunities – on a social level – reveal that their rights (tied to the individual's position in society and the citizens' society) are not accepted. It is realised that difficulties faced by some students, mainly those who reject school life, are based on identity affirmations and are interpreted in terms of ethnicity. These are all forms of reaction, by the juvenile, against an experienced feeling of rejection, since they are often victims of identity discrimination in their out-of-school life. The issue that is put forward is that of identity affirmation origin, that is, whether this precedes students' school life, or students carry this rational with them at school, or the school enhances the construction of similar interpretations. Focus is placed on interpreting school life rejection in terms of ethnicity in

relation to some students as well as on the creation of such an interpretation [33].

The institution of school is perceived as a social organisation which is part of the national institutional system and is integrated both into the whole social environment and a local space, which are strongly interrelated. It can be said that within school the ethnic categorisation is produced, reinforced or appeased through social activities realised in its framework. Some researchers associated the quality of students' school experience (expressed mostly in terms of school performance) with the identity choices, considering that the young who have developed practices of enclosure within racial and cultural definitions are mainly students who experience school failure [34]. Based on the issue of interaction, school performance is tied to the cooperative action of people being involved. It is about interactions in which the ethnic status may have some consequences. However, explaining immigrant children's school results cannot be limited through ethnic processes or results of the socio-economic variables or the impact of gender.

School difficulties, in terms of ethnicity, do not refer only to immigrant students, but even to those from underprivileged social environments. It is an outcome related to knowledge assimilation. This issue is concerned with ethnicity which focuses on students' origin, yet different interpretations are absent and the distance between them and school culture cannot be explained [35,36]. Ethnicity cannot be studied separately from processes of school inequalities. Destabilisation of pedagogic groups emerges mainly from rejecting the manner of knowledge transfer and not only through identity affirmations in terms of ethnicity. According to the dominant perception, identity affirmations emerge from a feeling experienced only by immigrant children. On the other hand, compulsory education, being progressively generalised, puts forward a contradiction between the majority of students of popular environments (immigrants or not) and school knowledge and culture, which on another occasion was the vested right of a socially privileged minority. The culture of social environments is not identified with that of school, while a student minority has already been familiarised with school culture. Thus, meeting with otherness within school is not a significant problem for immigrant children, but rather an issue of contrasting social classes [37,38].

Throughout the '60s and '70s sociologists indicated that school inequalities are strongly associated with socio-cultural differences among social classes and that students with cultural peculiarities as well as those from underprivileged social strata are more likely to be rejected. School claims to transfer universal knowledge or imposes a certain viewpoint to people, which is nothing more than the reflection of certain social groups. References [7] and [8] are central to cultural authority effects. Even though school is a space in which all social classes are mixed, it is evident, however, that social differences are not eliminated. On the contrary, school is in favor of the "dominant" social classes (that take advantage of their social position in order to benefit from state mechanisms) and secures their reproduction. The concept of "habitus" highlights the apparently "natural" ability through which a child from privileged social classes reproduces linguistic codes and norms of behavior utilised by the school, since the school culture is identified with the one of its own socio-cultural environment. On the contrary, a child from underprivileged social classes must struggle for school achievement. In case of failure, it is rejected by the system, having internalised its cultural inferiority. It is true that the school does not make any attempt to eliminate social differences, but rather it reproduces them. This sociology was characterised by a remarkable validity in a period when an enfeebled minority of the school population managed to graduate from senior high school. Massive education generated a completely different condition that did not eliminate exclusion processes, which work in a different way.

Today, it is realised that resistance is expressed in other forms such as a developing anti-school culture often observed at schools in which the majority of students comes from popular environments [39] in contrast to some sociologists' standpoints of the '60s and '70s who interpreted the poor school knowledge of children from labor classes as a resistance against the assimilation of the dominant culture [40]. Due to the enfeebling labor model, these students do not perceive that their contrast to school otherness derives from a socio-cultural distance [41]. The cultural difference for the young from popular environments (immigrants or not) is conceived, yet interpreted in terms of ethnic criteria and ethnic interpretative categories available, namely geographical origin or skin complex. At the same time, the fact that school

inequalities are strongly associated with socio-cultural differences among social classes, besides ethnic differences, is not underlined. They perceive dominance through what is more evident, such as skin complex (ethnic difference). Nonetheless, these aspects are less related to the cultural characteristics of the countries of origin even in the case when some characteristics like religion and values are included. The interpretation of relations in terms of ethnicity is expressed through the contrast between "they" and "we". "They" are "the others" who do not have the same living conditions, the same values, the same interests and the same cultural references. "We" are those ones who share common living conditions, common values, etc. The concepts of "they" and "we" are meaningful in their mutual distinction, that is, in their distinctive identity affirmations [38]. Besides ethnic differences, in terms of social differences among classes, it is noteworthy that the rejection of school by some students from popular environments, not the immigrant ones, is interpreted as the rejection of weak students by the school. As regards immigrant students, it is interpreted as the rejection of a school not supporting the "foreign students". Some students believe that they are victims of racism at school and this contributes to developing an anti-school culture as well as to the interpretation of destabilised pedagogical relations in terms of ethnicity. The conditions formed within school allow students to develop deep understanding about them in line with the same interpretative categories that explain out-of-school life, as their families experience discrimination on an everyday level. The school participates, in its own way, in the interpretation of school conditions in terms of ethnicity produced by students from popular environments (immigrants or not), the ones less familiarised with the school culture.

The distance between the school culture and the one of popular families is often indicated by the school in the form of deficit, that is, these students suffer from a socio-cultural deficit [38]. According to this perception, the regulation for school operation must be based on students whose family culture is identified with that of the school, a necessary prerequisite for school success. Students from popular environments are considered "deprived" by the school institution, without taking into consideration the fact that the privileged socio-cultural groups have internalised, since early childhood, the manner of school socialisation, the one regarded as

"natural" by the school. In this respect, the school does not assume responsibility for its transfer. In this vein, the school ignores the fact that the school culture is acquired and that the underprivileged families are the victims of this condition, since they have recorded school failure in their past. School partition between students, bringing difficulties even to good students, proves that students' personal traits precede schooling and that school offers to both groups of achievers and failures. The school, therefore, has a major disadvantage in terms of its operation, thus, a majority of students acquire the same disadvantage due to this school dysfunction [42].

The contrasts experienced by school subjects in popular neighborhoods as well as the relations of power observed within school are well-understood both by the young and the adults on the basis of an ethnic reading. The school is not able to create proper learning conditions and contributes, in this way, to people's enclosure within their own interpretative categories, while it should reinforce students to acquire new manners of thinking and understanding the causes of their school failure.

It is realised that the school, like all social spaces, can be an area of tension and ethnic discriminations, while its mission is to secure the base of a democratic society. Children can clarify their ideas, justify and monitor their way of thinking given that they form favorable conditions through mutual observations, negotiation and viewpoints exchange processes. When proper conditions are formed through interactions among children as well as between children and adults, the former can prove, regardless of their socio-cultural origin and previous evaluation that they are able to learn, construct useful tools for thinking and actively invest in knowledge construction. It is believed that school and educational practices organisation can lead to developing all children's potential while reflection for a unified education to put forward the democratisation of knowledge is imperative.

5. INTERCULTURALISM IN EDUCATION

Studying the wide range of educational-social inequalities, in the light of sociology of education, with emphasis on ethnic and socio-class and economic differences, it is necessary to showcase the intercultural nature of education and the success of the specific target on a practical level.

In particular, on a practical level, an intercultural education must necessarily address all groups, not merely the minority ones. According to Porcher [43], the intercultural issue, in order not to be specific, must be spherical, because should it address only a part of school population, then thorny contrasts and practical weaknesses come to the forefront.

Some authors render multicultural instruction a role of social critic. It is important to provide students the means necessary to undergo a critical examination of their cultural beliefs and develop their representation of the world by allowing them to broaden their perspectives [44].

Respecting different cultural traits can be achieved only in the case people are not entrapped in them, that is, they should be capable of developing an "intercultural" way of thinking. In a similar vein, intercultural education will not pay attention and will not show respect to individuals from different cultures in case their special characteristics are perceived as lesser. On the contrary, they should be perceived as a difference that deserves respect and that could be utilised positively within school and, therefore, be developed by removing cultural discriminations and attributing human rights to all students. Hence, the teaching materials must be selected more in relation to purely educational criteria and not in relation to students' cultural origin, transgressing in advance cultural discriminations and partitions [45].

To turn a multicultural society into an intercultural one, two prerequisites must be in force: the first one is concerned with the absence of cultural hierarchy so as to attribute equal legitimacy. The second one considers the co-existence of all values inadequate, as subjects must necessarily learn to negotiate in a democratic manner, in order to mutually accept the representations and common values that will allow the emergence of the group [46].

Today, there are two models to manage cultural diversity: the Anglo-Saxon multicultural one that provides each individual the opportunity to belong to a community different from that of the nation-state and intercultural orientation, which is mostly a French-speaking inspiration. The Anglo-Saxon dimension of multiculturalism is documented in a historic, political and educational tradition rather different from the French one. Multiculturalism gives priority to the reference group assuming that the individual's

behavior is defined by it. It recognises national, religious and immigrant differences by contributing to a space settlement of them. This is interpreted through the creation of ethnic neighborhoods which diverge from forming ghettos. The differences are, therefore, framed through the creation of sociological and geographical frameworks which are considered to be homogeneous according to self-attributed criteria or hetero-attributed criteria (Chinese, Italian or Greek neighborhoods). Multiculturalism accumulates differences, places groups side by side and ends up in a unified mosaic of society.

The term "intercultural" appeared in France within the school framework in 1975. In that country, the intercultural dimension is explained through a philosophical and historic tradition completely different from that of multiculturalism. French-speaking researchers summon the "intercultural" aspiring to social action, particularly to the construction of intercultural society. They consider the "multicultural" to be stemming from encounters and contacts when carriers of different systems spontaneously generate outcomes to which they do not interfere. The "intercultural", however, emerges when there is need to regulate the relations among those carriers to the least possible degree in order to decrease the undesired outcomes of an encounter and in the best case to benefit from their advantages [47].

In this respect, the "intercultural" refers to an intervention, to an intention to manage society, especially regarding the "undesired outcomes" stemming from the encounter among carriers of different cultures. The intercultural was initially associated with the problem of immigration. The latter focused on a certain diversity which comes from immigration, yet withheld other forms of diversity and other processes of differentiation: European construction, proliferation of international exchanges, globalisation of everyday life, professional or local culture, etc. [48].

Therefore, the intercultural is a product of interaction among all sectors of human activity: religious, political, economic, technical, scientific and aesthetic. Studying the different sectors of human activity helps understand the historic process. Cultures and the intercultural, in this respect, must be converted into a historic process. It is necessary to highlight the importance of historic exploration, which will lead us to develop deep understanding of the

processes through which cultural characteristics are generated, the geo-historic and geopolitical creation through interactions coming from the major historic cultural tides. Despite the fact that the cultures of countries are unique due to numerous historic evolutions, it is necessary to convert into the historic form of every social organisation.

In particular, in terms of seasonality and cultural characteristics of every social organisation, the works published by [10] revealed the relations between culture and social classes. They focus on processes and dynamics rather than on structures. From now on it is widely accepted that cultures cannot be understood as independent entities, away from forms of seasonality regarding the social and communicative. It is interesting, therefore, to detect how culture, or more accurately, cultural characteristics are used in communication, interactions and everyday life [49,50,51]. It is about a "culture in action" and not merely a description.

Therefore, the terms "heterogeneous" and "intrinsic" do not reconcile with descriptive studies which do not take into consideration the changes, alterations, contraventions, the creation of social and cultural character. The descriptions are based on the partition of the real. Therefore, it is necessary to secure the whole, a fact that refers to rejecting all those sociological approaches inscribed in explanation and not in understanding [52]. These approaches are inscribed in a positivist perspective because they remain in the descriptive and explanatory stage (determining a standpoint or behavior) confining the group or individual in a series of justifications and cultural differences [48].

The individual is not merely the product of their culture, but even more this is the one that constructs and processes it in relation to differentiated strategies in accordance with needs and coincidences. In this respect, the intercultural orientation is another way to analyse cultural diversity, not through the lens of cultural characteristics regarded as conditions, as independent and homogeneous entities, but through processes and interactions according to a rational of complexity and diversity (and not of differences) [53].

It can be inferred, therefore, that the central concept is not just that of culture, but the principle of cultural diversity. This idea, however, leads to the following paradox: the moment when

the interior of our societies, the significance of the variable culture and, therefore, the concept of culture are discovered, it is necessary to transgress them. It is not essential that we describe cultural characteristics, but analyse what happens among individuals or groups claiming that they belong to different cultures, analyse the social and communicative uses of culture.

Descriptive studies refer to a partition of the social web: immigrants, second generation, Asians, Africans… Descriptive studies, however, do not lead to understanding processes. In the case of descriptive studies, culture holds a causal value that can explain, for instance, school failure or violence. As a result, culturalism is introduced in pedagogy, psychology, sociology and it is not recognised as a cultural variable among other variables.

Intercultural analysis is distinct from cultural approaches or, more accurately, from culturalistic approaches to an extent in which it remains multidimensional. It is interesting to understand cultural multiplicity as a process and not as a total of distinct pluralisms. This means that multiplicity is not understood through the systematic and detailed partition of the social corpus (immigrants, the young, second generation…).

An unequal and hierarchical perspective is observed to the extent in which the dominant group having the right and power to promote the difference of the Other. The interest does not lie in whether recognition or respect is intended. The one side refuses to recognise differences, whereas the others vindicate them. Each time it is related to a norm either implied or not and whose exposure is possible for some groups or individuals standing in legitimacy [54].

The intercultural is based on the philosophy of the subject, that is, on a phenomenology that constructs the concept of the subject as free and responsible social being, belonging to a community of similar beings. The intercultural approach contradicts the objectivist and structuralism perspective since it is interested in the production of culture through the subject itself, in the strategies developed, yet without the subject being aware of it.

According to the phenomenological perspective which is based on the intercultural, culture is not a social reality in itself which can be understood

objectively. It is rather an experience whose concept is going to be reconstructed. Reference is not made to the subject as a unit, but on the contrary to the interrelation tied to the dialectical identity/otherness. The effects stemming from the environment and structures are not ignored, yet cultures do not exist except for the case in which they are referred to by the subjects which give them life and can transform them, too [55,56]. Focusing on the subject does not intend to underline individualistic theories, but rather take into consideration the grid of subjectivities through which this is introduced. The concept of interaction is considered significant to define culture and cultural identity [49,50,51].

The intercultural approach neither seeks to define the other by confining them within a network of meanings, nor to establish a series of comparisons based on an ethnocentric scale. Through this perspective cultural differences are defined not as objective facts of statistical nature, but as dynamic relations between two entities that give meaning to each other [48]. Focus is placed on the dynamics and not on structures and categories. The significance of the other is necessary to communicate and negotiate, as well as to manage conflicts among groups and individuals. Any negative or conflicting relation is not justified by the cultural origin. The carrier of a culture is not necessarily the representative, "the model" of their community.

Consequently, the other cannot be defined by attributing to them the characteristics of a cultural group defined assumingly and arbitrarily. What is important is to develop deep understanding of the way in which the subjects perceive themselves, as well as their representations and, at the same time, to recognise the other as a unique and universal subject.

6. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, it can be said that the issue of cultural diversity entails the one of encounter and the experience of otherness. The various cultural models highlight people's differentiation and re-introduce the issue of values. From now on the importance lies in not being aware of cultural characteristics, but of the relation to the others. The stake is to correlate otherness and cultural diversity and through interculturalism, as a social and educational value, to target bluntness of school and social inequalities, positive interaction of different ethnic and non-social groups in order to achieve a smooth co-existence, cooperation

and multifaceted inter-improvement of them and their intercultural society [57,58,59,60,61,62].

Thus, in a world overwhelmed by intense cultural exchanges, it is not possible to claim that there is democracy without recognition of diversity tied to cultural characteristics and the relations of authority that exist among them. Cultural minorities in their struggle to liberate themselves may be led to forming their communities that is, being submitted to the authoritative political power. On the contrary, the recognition of diversity may lead to self-partition. Cultures, in this case, are self-confined in their own framework as they consider any attempt for communication coming from outside a form of attack.

Co-existence is the aim that cannot be achieved only through nice words and moral recommendations. For this reason, researchers conduct studies pertaining to the socio-cultural diversity introduced by immigrations as well as studies that correlate cultural diversity with interpersonal communication. These approaches are significant contributors, as they focus on the relation, co-existence among different cultural communities living in the same social space. These studies are often an attempt to answer social questions imposed by the immigrating populations towards Western Europe by placing their interest in the conditions that lead to the establishment of an intercultural society.

The general westernisation of the world and major civilisations through know-how does not entail, however, the consent and complete adherence to Western values and works. This is an unequal relation of powers between the Western civilisation and the other civilisations. In this case, preventing a potential social turmoil (given the universal consent to Western values) will commence on the basis of peaceful co-existence of different values in which each civilisation will learn not only to accept, but even to recognise the Other.

To achieve universalism, there should be a common perception of the world, acceptance of all values and institutions of the different cultures. The only value that can become universal seems to be tolerance that indicates recognition not only in the existence of the Other, but rather in their values. Tolerance is a moral, philosophical and political value, the product of intercultural rational discourse, of the universal conscience.

We are, therefore, invited to live in a diverse world and particularly in a world where different cultures and representations live together. We ought to learn how to understand and respect the others by tracing ways of living and mutual respect in society and school. Human rights are a term and the limit of democracy [63], as both consolidate the course to interculturalism. Thus, interculturalism, democracy and human rights must be an experience for students at school in the first place so as to further spread them in society [64,65]. The education of European nations has the duty to directly or indirectly promote experiential learning of the intercultural culture.

The issue of school failure has been insufficiently addressed although it had been underlined since the '60s, as mentioned in the above chapters. In the contemporary intercultural societies and on the basis of the evolutionary population mobility conditions, the nation-states' educational policy should revisit the policy of rights to education so as to mitigate social inequalities, to reinforce the democratic operation of educational institutes along with the immigrants and refugees' social integration. The harmonious operation of education pertains to the broader objective to reinforce democracy and mitigate social inequalities. In this respect, political parties, state carriers and the educational community should cooperate towards increasing opportunities structures for all citizens, facilitating social mobility and operating the welfare state in order to avoid social exclusion and marginalisation. Therefore, the solution lies in effective democratic education to achieve co-existence along with individuals and people's harmonious cooperation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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