

Education in Europe: New challenges in a globalised world

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Education is facing important challenges as consequences of globalization. In Europe three main tasks are being approached in the schools: the integration of ICT, the assessment of quality in education, and attention to cultural diversity.

- 1) >From the globalization perspective, the integration of ICT in the classrooms is a necessity, and it is being responded to at different speeds according to the different realities of the 25 European countries. The main objective, shared by Educational Administrations, is the integration of ICT in the classes, and facilitate ICT literacy during school years. This challenge requires a double demand: the availability of resources and knowing how to use them properly. In this sense, the KIDSMART PROJECT has been carried out around the world since 1999; the project is funded by IBM and provides Infant Education classrooms with equipment which consists of a PC, inserted in a decorated childhood furniture, and a software pack. The impact of the introduction of this equipment in the classes has been evaluated in Europe (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). The main results of this project show the positive impact of the use of computers on child development (cognitive and social), teachers educational approaches, and context stimulation (Lera & Ruiz, 2003). Some of these results will be presented at the Conference
- 2) Quality of education traditionally includes two dimensions: the importance of academic achievement and the importance of social and personal development. All countries would agree that both aspects are important; nevertheless, philosophical traditions in Europe can explain that some countries give more importance to academic achievement while others emphasise social development. To improve academic achievement, the amount of assessment has been increased, including evaluation of schools, teachers, and students, allowing comparisons and ranking between them. While, on the other hand, more projects aimed at improving social development have been funded for the European Commission for Education. In this area the project NOVASRES has been carried out with the objective of developing materials for

preventing school violence (NOVAS RES, 2002). As part of these materials, there is an educational unit for raising awareness of the problem of bullying, and analysis of the consequences of using violence as a way to sort out conflicts. Following the SFA model – Sensibilization-Formation-Action (Lera, 2003); this activity starts with a comic (Lera & Cela, 2000) -illustrated by students- which explains the bully's perception (Lera, Sanchez, & Oliver, 2003); it is followed by an explanation of causes and consequences of bullying, and students are encouraged to analyse this problem at school level, family level and political level (Lera, in press). Part of these materials will be presented at the Conference

- 3) As an effect of globalization, more immigrants are coming to Europe, and schools are facing important new challenges, such as provision of appropriate attention to non-European students. The main problems are the communication (language) and the low level of knowledge that teachers have about other cultures. In this sense, the European Project, “LA MALETA INTERCULTURAL”, is being developed with the objective of providing educational materials for teachers and students (Perez Escamilla & Olias, in press). These materials have been designed in order to integrate academic curricula and socio-cultural aspects. An example of the Sciences area is the teaching unit on “nutrition”. This educational unit was developed following the SFA model; it starts with a presentation of the Saharan people (an audio-visual composition based on photographs taken in Tinduf). Through this presentation students are asked about the food they eat, why, and what are the consequences. These three questions are the opening to doing a nutritional analysis of the diet of Saharans; scientific knowledge is provided at the same time that students learn social and cultural aspects, raising awareness of the non-Human conditions they are living in for so long (Lera, Torres, & Allepuz, in press). A summary of these materials will be presented at the Conference.

This presentation tries to show the main challenges that European teachers are facing as a consequence of globalization. These new challenges are presented with some experiences that are taking place in Europe using a new educational methodology (SFA). These educational experiences are based on the principle that education is the way for raising awareness, getting knowledge and developing critical actions, which could contribute to improve Human relationships in a globalised world.

References

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