GLOBALIZATION, MIGRATION AND CULTURE DIVERSITY

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Abstract
The aim of the study is to analyse society’s attitude towards globalization, increased immigration and multicultural dialogue emphasizing the importance of multicultural education. The investigation is based on the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ (No.: 07-LVA01-C006-00167-2) where five EU countries (Latvia, Slovakia, Portugal, the Netherlands and Ireland) are involved. During investigation, a qualitative research has been done. The EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ coordinators (teachers experts) were interviewed to discover their own experience and attitude towards globalization, migration, intercultural dialogue as well as their observations of their students’ (aged 12-15) attitude and knowledge at the beginning of the project and dynamics - how changes their attitude when they have a possibility to visit a particular country and meet its inhabitants. The results show a positive progress of the teachers’ and students’ knowledge about the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ involved countries. During the project, mobilities students live in host families which gives them an excellent opportunity to get introduced with the particular EU country’s family, their everyday life, traditions and habits. It helps them better understand people from different cultures and learn to appreciate the culture diversity.

Key words: migration, radicalism, intercultural dialogue, culture, integration.

Introduction
During globalization when increases immigration and many people go to work and study abroad in other cultures, difficulties of intercultural communication (intercultural communication occurs whenever a message produced in one culture must be processed in other culture and the message must be understood (Kim, 1998)) may arise as well as racial discrimination and race-hatred. The role of multicultural education is to reduce radicalism, racial discrimination and promote integration processes in society emphasizing multicultural dialogue and culture diversity. Many scientists from all over the world, like P.S. Adler, I. Apine, J.A. Banks, Y.Y. Kim have done investigations proving the fact that multicultural education reduces society’s radicalism and discrimination among nations. Studies of different cultures and traditions help to improve international relationships and the multicultural dialogue and to avoid some degree of culture shock that may happen when first time live abroad, especially in a very different culture. ‘The ability to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultures and co cultures benefits each of us as individuals and has the potential to benefit the other 5.5 billion people with whom we share this planet’ (Samovar and Porter, 1991).

The aim of the study was to discover their own experience and attitude towards globalization, migration and intercultural dialogue. The teachers experts’ observations of their students’ attitude and knowledge were estimated and dynamics when they have a possibility to visit a particular country and meet its inhabitants. The results show a positive progress of the teachers’ and students’ attitude and knowledge about the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ involved countries.

Materials and Methods
The investigation described in this article is based on the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ where five EU countries are involved (Latvia, Slovakia, Portugal, the Netherlands and Ireland) and was done in spring 2008. This is a continuing research, on which basis the author will work out the doctor thesis.

The data were obtained using a qualitative research - interviews. The coordinators (teachers experts) from all five countries involved in the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ were interviewed. The interviews were made according to A. Kroplijs and M. Račevska ‘Methods of Qualitative Research in Social Sciences’ (Kroplijs and Račevska, 2004). It was partly structured interviews, according to A. Geske and A. Grinfelds ‘Educational Research’ (Geske and Grinfelds, 2006).

The aim of the investigation was to analyse the teachers experts’ from all five EU countries involved in the Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’:
1) own experience and attitude towards globalization,
migration, intercultural dialogue;
2) observations of their students’ attitude and knowledge at the beginning of the project and dynamics - how changes their attitude when they have a possibility to visit a particular country and meet its inhabitants.

The research basis – coordinators (teachers experts) from participating countries (Latvia, Slovakia, Portugal, the Netherlands and Ireland) in the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’. The teachers experts were selected on their high-level education basis (12 Masters’ and 3 Doctors’ degrees in Pedagogy) as well as on their long working experience - more than 10 years in pedagogy and project coordination (55). This factor is essential for getting valid information.

Schools and countries from where teachers experts participated in the investigation were:
1) Satini Primary School, Saldu region, Latvia (there work 23 teachers and it has 130 students, in the research participated 10 teachers experts);
2) CJC Riga Pupils’ Palace, Riga, Latvia (there work 95 teachers and it has 3956 students, in the research participated 15 teachers experts);
3) Zakladna School, Kezhmarok, Slovakia (there work 50 teachers and it has 867 students, in the research participated 12 teachers experts);
4) Agrupament de Escolas da Guia, Portugal (there work 125 teachers and it has 917 students, in the research participated 12 teachers experts);
5) Montessori College, Nijmegen, the Netherlands (there work 57 teachers and it has 597 students, in the research participated 11 teachers experts);
6) Merci College, Sligo, Ireland (there work 57 teachers and it has 597 students, in the research participated 10 teachers experts).

Most of the interviews were made during the project mobilities in 2008 when all project partners met each other in a particular country (in February, 2008, meeting in Portugal; in May, 2008, meeting in Latvia; in October, 2008, meeting in Ireland). The rest of the interviews and additional information were gained using telephones and e-mails from February till December 2008.

Results and Discussion

Respondents’ opinion on Globalization

Gained results show different attitudes towards globalization. Summarizing the answers we can divide respondents in two parts. One part of respondents (75%) acknowledges globalization and has a positive attitude towards globalization, while others (25%) has a negative attitude towards globalization.

Most of the respondents (87%) recognize globalization as a fact of life, which is here to stay. They say that it brings problems like the rise of Transnational Corporations which have become more powerful than national governments but which are not responsible to anyone except their shareholders. Also, while governments seem to want free movement of goods and services they wish to restrict the free movement of people. People sometime say - we are creating ‘Fortress Europe’, for example in an attempt to keep out poor people from other countries. Respondents from the Eastern part of Europe (65%) (Latvia and Slovakia) confess that they meet globalization in very limited fields of human activities. They agree with globalization in communications and telecommunication sector, transport, science, statistics and life saving and warming systems but not in the fields of culture, traditions and ways of lives. Respondents from Slovakia (98%) say that after joining the European Union in May 2004, there have been a lot of discussions about keeping up their national, economic and cultural identity in common Europe. They agree that the possible way to reach it is keeping of own traditions, habits and culture in every detail. The task of the future is finding margins between integration (globalization) and national identity and originality.

Respondents’ opinion on Migration

Speaking about migration in general, respondents (56%) say that migration brings many positive benefits and also some challenges. They acknowledge that it is good to be enriched by other cultures and other ideas and point out that migration has always happened though not on the same scale as at present. Saying that countries need new life, new blood, and new ideas, respondents (71%) support migration but at the same time emphasize the fact of challenge that arises because change is not always easy and learning to accommodate diverse cultures, languages and religions takes time. Irish respondents (98%) say that Irish people have a history of migration and now it is their turn to receive migrants from many countries. Respondents from Latvia and Slovakia (74%) say that in general migration can contribute to understanding of different nations, learning of languages, gaining of useful working experience. Respondents from Slovakia (87%) say that at the moment they feel a huge impact of the brain drain in Slovakia. Highly educated people and especially young people leave the country because of earning much more money abroad. They are worried that it might have really devastating effect on their society. The same happens in Latvia.

Respondents form the Netherlands and Portugal (57%) have quite negative attitude towards migration in their
country. They explain that immigrants bring negative changes in their country. Respondents from Latvia and Slovakia (7 respondents) have noticed that there is no such problem in their country because these countries do not attract a lot of immigrants at the moment. In general they think that countries should provide political asylum and help people in need, but as it is seen in some European countries too many economy immigrants can cause tension in the society. All respondents from Ireland (10 respondents) welcome the diversity and variety but at the same time says that not everyone does. If immigrants are seen to bring down the price of labour and native people lose jobs because immigrants are willing to work for less that can cause resentment. The solution they give is not to ban immigration but to make sure that labour laws are minimum wage holidays, etc. should be enforced.

All respondents (100%) from all countries agree that immigrants in their host country must have a possibility of keeping their native language, traditions, and lifestyles but at the same time they must learn the language, traditions and lifestyle of the host country as well as respect its legislation. Irish respondents (96%) admit that a lot of immigrants can be a danger for the host country if immigrants do not become integrated within the host society. The given example about America shows that this country is made up of waves and waves of immigrants but America is a very patriotic society. Second and third generation immigrants will see themselves as Irish and American or Latvian and Irish or whatever. The type of patriotism, which depends on a monolithic culture, is not good. Irish respondents (89%) also say that Northern Ireland is probably an example of a place, which is not united and where to one half of the population being patriotic means being Irish and to the other half it means being British. It could be said that the Ulster Unionists were immigrants for several hundred years that displaced the local population so immigration cannot be forced by governments.

In all interviewed countries respondents say that there is a possibility for immigrants to get a citizenship when they pass exams but at the same time they confess that integration work is not enough done. Irish respondents (10 respondents) say that there are also some diversity and tolerance programmes but there is not enough funding available. In Ireland immigrants are welcomed as workers but not enough has been done to welcome them as human beings.

It is also an interesting fact that all respondents admit a possibility of going abroad for a while for studies and gaining new experience but very few of them (3%) admit a possibility of working abroad.

Respondents’ opinion on Culture Heritage

Speaking about the knowledge of different countries, cultures and traditions as provided at schools, all respondents (100%) say that it is not enough. Respondents from Latvia and Slovakia (95%) say that geographical knowledge given at their schools is sufficient but they should improve education in tolerance and respect to other nations. Respondents from the Netherlands and Portugal (87%) admit that they have a very poor knowledge about the Eastern Europe countries, like Slovakia and Latvia. Respondents from Ireland (79%) say that schools can impact knowledge through History, Language teaching, European studies, etc. and it is difficult to pass on a positive attitude to other cultures as attitudes at home and in the wider community are more influential on students. All respondents say (100%) that curriculum has not been adapted to help learn about other cultures. Irish respondents (6 respondents) give an example that the junior history syllabus gives a choice to learn about ancient Greece or Rome as examples of another civilization but there is no choice to do Chinese Civilization instead even though they have Chinese students. Also the history course teaches about the Renaissance but gives no information about the Muslim contribution to European civilization. Language students do learn about the culture of France, Germany or Spain.

All respondents (100%) say that there is a big difference between knowledge given at schools and gained abroad. Direct contact with country and its people is invaluable. The most important ‘human dimension’ is missing in school education and this can be given to students through the exchanges during project mobilities when students visit a particular country. Slovak respondents (58%) say that understanding each other is not only the matter of knowledge but mainly it is about our communication and feelings of friendship and cooperation. Irish respondents (87%) admit that it depends on how the knowledge is gained abroad. If one gets an opportunity to live with a family, go to school or work, meet local people then the knowledge is worthwhile, but if one is a tourist staying in a hotel and only seeing touristy things one may not get much knowledge. There it should be explained that in our EU Comenius school project ‘Richness in Diversity’ mobilities students live with host families, go to school, attend lessons and meet local people.

Respondents’ answers (100%) showed the discrepancy between a tourist visit and project mobility. They say that tourist visit can be more superficial and the emphasis is on seeing sights and spending time with family or friends one travelled with. However, they admit the fact that if one is interested as a tourist one can discover a lot about
the culture of the country but if one does not know the language of the host country it is not possible to meet local people in any meaningful way. Slovak respondents (86%) also agree that there is a wide gap between being in the country as a tourist or as a participant of the project. You can see buildings, towns, fine arts and many other valuable things as a tourist but you do not usually have a chance to meet people, to know their real lives, their feelings and opinions. The best guide is a service provider only, but your project partner is a friend and a colleague who gives you informal personal information and it is extremely valuable and important. One Irish respondent gives an example that she had a very interesting visit to Cordoba in Spain where she got a lot of information about the Islamic, Roman and Jewish cultures, which helped to shape it but she did not speak Spanish and even the wonderful Roman museum she could not follow all the information signs about the exhibits. At the same time when she visited Kempten, Sligo’s Twin Town in Bavaria and stayed with exchange hosts of her daughter, the families showed her around and share their town in Bavaria and stayed with exchange hosts of her the same time when she visited Kempten, sligo’s twin.

During the mobilities, respondents (98%) notice that students have no problems to communicate and they want to understand each other. They could not feel any national or ethnic barriers between them and they behaved very friendly. Seven Slovak respondents say that students are very curious about their host families’ life style and they have no difficulties in respecting the existing differences. While 30% of Irish respondents have noticed that most students are not very curious about or interested in other cultures, but in general Irish students do not show any overt racism or hostility towards students from other cultures but in general, they do not go out of their way to include them or make them welcome. This applies equally to the migrant students. If there are a number of them they tend to associate with their own peer group. Language difficulties on both sides partly explain this but the respondents think that it is also because teenagers tend to be very wrapped up in their own peer group and are not very curious about other groups. This does not apply just to other cultures but also to urban versus rural or sporty versus non sporty within the same culture. These respondents also think that younger students, i.e. primary school age seem to be more open to diversity but the teenage years are a time for the dominance of the peer group.

Discussing activities that should be carried out at school and during project mobilities to teach students appreciate all nations, all respondents (100%) point out different group works, creative works, working together and sport activities. Also different cultural practices need to be explained to students, e.g. fasting during Ramadan, etc. There needs to be a debate about where the boundaries between respect for another culture and insisting on the basic human rights understanding of one’s own culture lie. An Irish respondent gives an example that one can respect some cultural practices but not all, e.g. corporal punishment, gender discrimination, etc. Irish respondents (87%) admit that a lot needs to be done to impress on Irish students that not being able to
speak English is not a sign of a lack of intelligence and activities need to be fostered which are not language dependent, e.g. games, art, crafts, etc.

Six Irish respondents give an interesting comment on migration. They say that Ireland now has a very large immigrant population especially from Eastern Europe. This is a very new experience for us as up to the 1980’s Irish people needed to emigrate to find work themselves and there are millions of people of Irish descent all over the world. Attitudes to immigration were shaped to a great extent by the large numbers of asylum seekers who arrived in Ireland from 1999 onwards. They were not allowed to work and it took years to process their applications, so, to a great extent, they were seen as ‘scroungers’ who were exploiting the Irish people. Making education provision for the children of asylum seekers was the first experience the Irish government had of accommodating diversity.

Since the government did not regard the asylum seekers as long-term residents it was reluctant to invest too much in providing for them. The accession of the new EU countries brought large numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe. People came because of the growth in the economy and many brought their families with them. This has huge implications for education but while language teachers have been appointed and Intercultural Guidelines produced nothing has been done at an official level to train teachers for the new situation or to adapt the curriculum. The government has not done enough to help society as a whole adapt to the change. Immigrants have been viewed as workers and all their other needs to a great extent ignored. They admit that this is changing a little now. Ireland has a Minister for Integration, and various area partnerships are working on diversity projects but it needs to be more mainstream.

Figure 1 shows teachers experts’ attitude and importance of globalization, migration and preservation of the culture heritage in their own country as well as in the European Union.

Having studied scientific works about immigration and integration the author came across with many examples of negative attitude towards immigrants. Because of the different history there is a big discrepancy between Eastern and Western EU countries, and the common tendencies show that. People from the Eastern countries migrate to the Western countries as there they find better living conditions. It is also observed in Latvia and Slovakia when their inhabitants emigrate to the Western EU countries for better job and living conditions (Krūma and Īndāns, 2007). People’s negative attitude and attacks towards immigrants show their fears about their national identity, their culture values as well as they are afraid of terrorism threats in their countries (Krūma and Īndāns, 2007). Radicalism is considered as the main influencing factor of terrorism, e.g. a separate social group – new Muslims - men who are not integrated in Western societies and therefore foster radicalism processes in society (Reire, 2007). In democratic societies, names ‘extreme’ and ‘radical’ usually describe groups which do not recognize common values (Rostoks, 2007). It is impossible to think about radicalism in different ethnical groups’ relationships, attitude towards immigrants, religion and cultural minorities without definite political context. To avoid this it is important for the host country to solve immigrants’ problems (Ijabs, 2007). Speaking about
social or culture identity it is important to understand that every individual has a need to belong to a particular group – to be a part of the social group which has common values. Different social groups that have to live together have the same question of mutual relations and the result is social world – society as it is now. Every social group has its own norms, values and means of expression and experiences, which characterizes and differs from other groups (Vasariņa, 2007). The basic idea of understanding and successful multicultural dialogue is connected with the presumption of the objectivity of moral norms – there exists something that everybody should recognize (Mužniece, 2007). To influence society’s consolidation it is important for the public governance to choose people from different social groups, for instance, in educational, demographical, ethnical, political structures. It is also considered to be more democratic model (Reinholde, 2007) and it fosters integration processes in society. We have to confess that EU partner countries can get a lot of economical and other benefits from immigrants. Therefore it is important to integrate immigrants in their host country’s society (Krūma and Indāns, 2007).

Conclusions
1. Teachers and students who participate in the EU Comenius school partnership project ‘Richness in Diversity’ and during the project mobilities visit the particular country and get acquainted with its inhabitants, culture, traditions and habits become more tolerant towards culture diversity.
2. The fact that during the project mobilities when students are assimilated into the local society and they live in the host families provide optimal conditions for a particular country’s culture studies.
3. Going abroad as a tourist and living in the hotel without knowing the local language is more difficult to understand the local culture and traditions.
4. During the project activities students have an opportunity practically to use the foreign languages taught at school as well they can study languages which they do not cover at schools.
5. During globalization when we all have to live together it is important to be tolerant to the diversity, avoid radicalism and intolerance. Therefore it is important for the new generation to provide multicultural education at school and promote participation in the EU projects in order to get to know other cultures better.

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References


