

ANALYZING AND SUPPORTING THE WELL-BEING THROUGH EDUCATION IN AN INTERCULTURAL-SOCIETY

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Abstract: *The paper is the result of a long term observation and of my personal experience put in the context of a in-depth reflection, based on the documentation focused on the theoretical aspects involved understood and connected among them. The leading role of education, in connection to heredity and background, for the complex process of developing the human character is put into the context of the new manifestation of migration nowadays, at the beginning of this new millennium. This role is considered in connection with the processes of enculturation, acculturation, and cultural adaptation in the context of changing the status of an emigrant to the status of an immigrant. The specific issues of migration nowadays are briefly but openly approached. The way in which education is involved in each of the mentioned processes is synthetically presented. The paper opens routes for further development of reflections upon the educational priorities in the years to come. Even if it is an already debated issue, the core topic of this paper seems to become crucial these years when new faces of migration appear to be a priority of humanity concern. The paper tries to suggest that proper formal education, well designed, creatively and effectively implemented and carefully assessed and managed can support in a positive way the synergy of informal and no-formal education in different contexts of human lives. This synergy can be the fundamental of genuine well-being, even if this concept itself is strongly subjective.*

Key concepts: *migration; emigrant-immigrant; enculturation; inculturation; education as a leading actor; multicultural society; intercultural education; well-being;*

1. Migration as an ongoing, complex, and dynamic phenomenon during the first decades of the third millennium

This decade of the third millennium came with an interesting and nuanced meaning of some core values of humanity as multiculturalism and intercultural education, enculturation, acculturation, migration with its wings emigration and immigration, cultural adaptation, and well-being.

It is an issue of courage to try to understand the meaning of these concepts by reading different definitions of them in the literature. Their meaning is interesting nuanced, sometimes contradictory, other times intimately connected but rarely in the same way.

It isn't the intention of this paper to present an exhaustive portrait of these definitions. The core focus of this paper is on the education and its role within the nowadays society, a society where the connections among the meanings of these concepts have a specific dynamic.

Why education? Because of a perennial motive, perpetually present in the evolution of mankind: the permanence of education as an informal, nonformal, and, later, the formal process of influence on man, along the phylogeny understood as the human's development along the times, and the permanence of education as a leading factor of the genesis of human character.

Niculescu R.M. (2015) speaks about parts of the causes of nowadays migration process distinguishing between two main categories of determinant factors, called in terms of *push and pull factors*.

Usually, or better saying, initially, people live within the society where they were born and have been educated. The dynamic and the speed of communication within nowadays society create an interesting phenomenon: migration.

People born and educated within a national background are tempted to experience life within another national context. Step by step this movement among different countries and nations determined the development of multicultural societies within the border of each country where come or where from leave people. "Push factors" could be objectives and subjective ones. Objective factors are certainly connected to the economic level, the country development in terms of health, education, service systems. These aspects are put in connection with the individuals' levels of aspirations and expectations, which represent the subjective factors.

On the other side, new countries, other than the native ones, seem, or really are, more developed and offer better opportunities, subjectively perceived or real. These are "pull factors".

2. Connected aspects involved by migration

The people become emigrants when they wish and act in order to leave their native country. This emigration process can occur for some people at maturity for others (usually, members of the adults' families) at childhood. The development as humans of these emigrants is led by *education* within a given *social and geographical background*, and starting with the base offered by *heredity*. It is important to highlight the leading role of education for this personogenesis process.

Even in this millennium, unfortunately, the educational process within the formal context is significantly different from a country to another. Different are the influences of culture, tradition, ancestral patterns upon the way of being designed and implemented the formal education in different parts of the world.

Thus, the *enculturation* process, seen as the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values¹, gives a specific nuance to each personality developed within the context.

The moment of the turning of an emigrant into an immigrant living in another country than the native one is a very important one. There are a consistent number of theories describing and theorizing the complex aspects of this moment. An emigrant turned into an immigrant seems to pass a short period of euphoria, until the moment of confronting with the real life of the new country, seen now as a host where the immigrant must be properly integrated, as a professional, citizen, as a human living in a new context. This new context was previously seen in the happiest case as a tourist. The newcomer feels for the first time the huge difference between being tourist or reader about another country and the status of a candidate to an active integration within it.

Different people traverse this moment in very specific and individual ways, strongly influenced by an important number of aspects. On one side a significant influence has the way which the newcomer's national origin is perceived, very different in different countries. On the other side, the dimension of the immigrants belonging to the same nationality of origin and the relations among these people, and of them with the multitude of the other immigrants living in the same country are other important factors of influence for this turning moment of an emigrant into an immigrant.

The initial moment is followed by a sinuous trajectory, with ups and downs, both in terms of insertion in work, and insertion and social integration, both of them with an equally sophisticated emotional accompaniment.

¹ Merriam-webster definition <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enculturation>

The next steps are essentially determined by the philosophy of the host country, by the dominant model of ethnic relations in which a nation-state's constituent ethnic groups act and relate to each other.

Two important models are described by the literature; they are usually named as Melting Pot or the Salad Bowl models. A consistent number of combinations are to be found in different parts of the world. The core difference between these two models (largely discussed and debated, especially in the USA) is connected to several concepts as: assimilation, adaptation, influence in the context of a complex process, the process of acculturation.

Enculturation is almost a natural process considered as the very first familiarization to a particular culture. It begins right after the birth as a necessary process that often occurs without or with a natural formal educational influence. It is the process of learning and adapting from own culture. Sandesh Adhikary (2018)

Acculturation as a process occurs only when two or more cultures meet. In the immigration process, the culture of the newcomer meets with the culture of the host country (already influenced by other cultures within the multicultural society).

Together with Sandesh Adhikary (2018) I say that acculturation involves a process of learning, adopting from the other's culture, and adapting to the other's culture.

The two mentioned models look at the process of acculturation through different eyes. The melting pot model emphasizes the necessity of assimilation of the culture of newcomers by the culture existing in the host country. In this case, the acculturation can be seen as a process by which one's culture becomes subsumed by others. The Salad Bowl model shows that the assimilation is not necessary, because each culture should keep its treasures, features even if suffer influences from other cultures and has influences upon other cultures, as long as they coexist within the same space (geographical and social).

Reality shows a wide palette of situations. Not all the immigrants suffer the same influences even if they enter within a society functioning based only on one of the two mentioned models.

The adult immigrants are strongly influenced by their own enculturation process, scrolled before leaving the country. In addition, the newcomer status, especially during the declining moments of integration increases the need for anchoring and keeping of the culture they come from.

It is not the same situation with the children who start in the new context more a process of enculturation than an acculturation one. This quasi-enculturation process is influenced by the effort of the parents to preserve the cultural roots. This type of influences leads to a nuanced palette of results. (fig.1)

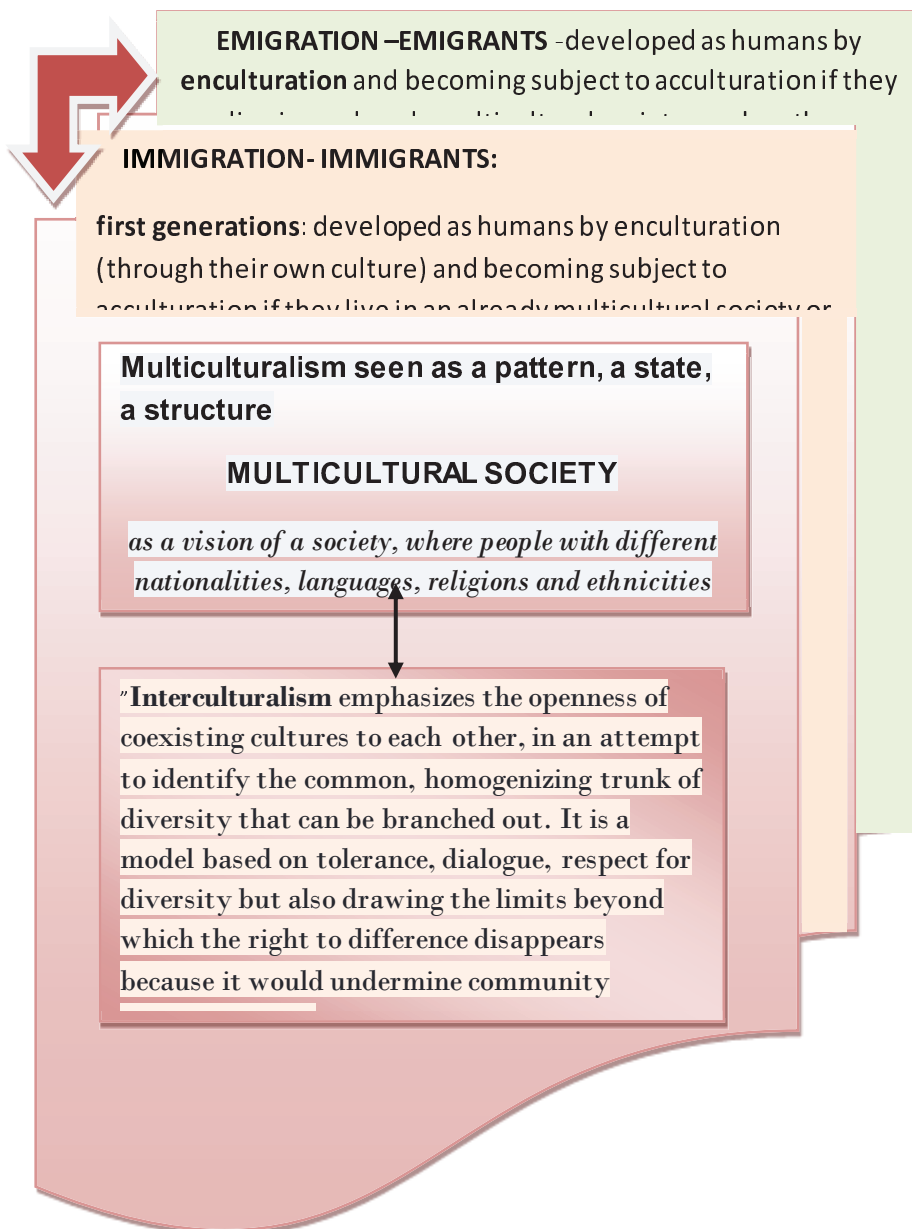


Fig.1 Connections among concepts

1. Ciolan A. Multiculturalism vs interculturalism/ <https://www.zf.ro/ziarul-de-duminica/cand-aud-de-cultura-vii-multiculturalism-vs-interculturalism-de-alexandru-ciolan-7730103>

2: the process by which a human being acquires the culture of a particular

As previous papers highlighted (Niculescu R.M., 2013; Niculescu R.M., 2015, Bazgan M., Niculescu R.M., 2016) the *cultural adaptation* to a new national, social, geographical context is a complex process, passed in a very individual and specific manner by each human being.

The *cultural adaptation* generally understood as an ongoing, evolutionary process is the process that put the individuals in the situation to modify their personal habits and customs, developed during the enculturation process in order to fit into a particular new culture. This adaptation is done in very personal manners, strongly influenced by the specifics of education along the enculturation process and along with the acculturation one, as well, for each person.

No matter how personalized is this process the common aim of all the human individuals is to find the desired wellbeing. But this wellbeing is also a very subjective concept.

The subjectivity is a normal status because each human (even if one talks about twins) has a unique given by birth feature (as a result of heredity put in individual intrauterine life, and of the very personal moment of birth), and further, an unique evolution influenced by background and education. What is really important is that the mechanisms of education are able to correct or to substitute deficiencies of the background or of heredity.

The presented reflections tries to suggest that proper formal education, well designed, creatively and efficiently implemented, carefully assessed and managed (both in enculturation process and in acculturation one) can support in a positive way the synergy of informal and no-formal education in different contexts of human lives, with positive results for the well-being of the human communities.

3. Wellbeing -a concept with wide and nuanced features. The specific role of education as a leading factor for determining the nuances

Even if it is difficult to find a consensus around a common definition of wellbeing, there are some core aspects that find a kind of general agreement. Thus, wellbeing appears to include the presence of positive emotions and moods (satisfaction, happiness, etc.), and a total or partial absence of negative emotions (dissatisfaction, sadness, etc). A person who estimates himself /herself as satisfied with life, who judges his/her one life as being positive is considered as a person appreciating her/his wellbeing.

This paper tries to highlight the role of education during the enculturation and the acculturation process (if it is the case) in determining the nuances of the wellbeing perception.

Firstly it is important to distinguish between the role of education in the enculturation and, respectively, acculturation process.

In the enculturation process, the education (formal, no-formal and informal) acts somewhat naturally. The children, and further, the teens, and young adults develop their personality based on their own heredity, influenced in a very different manner (motivating or with braking effects) by his/ her own familial, social, economic background and strongly influenced by the educational factor. This educational factor itself is the result of an interesting and particular synergy of the formal education system with the specific offers of the no-formal education within a concrete national context, and, very important, the informal education factor strongly involving the national level of culture and civilization.

Secondly, for the adults turned from emigrants into immigrants a process of adult education starts. Many western countries from Europe or from the American continent specifically organize courses focused on helping the newcomers' integration. They are involved in a complex process of acculturation.

Thirdly, the newcomers' children are integrated into the new country school system with specific support aiming to make the process as easy as possible. These children (preschoolers,

students in primary school, teens or even young adults enrolled in post-high school education) are involved in processes of enculturation and acculturation acting together, with a dominant of one or another according to the moment of their ontogenesis moment.

An interesting emotional struggle is done between the wish of the family to see their children adapted to the new society and the need for preserving the cultural roots.

Observing a number of immigrants coming from different parts of the world within Canadian society, during more than nine years (an occasional or an intentional observation) a conclusion arises: *the younger the emigrants migrate (especially the early years of childhood), their linguistic, school, social integration in the new context is made easier. But at the same time, their parents have to make more effort to preserve the cultural values of their home country, even by resorting to education formulas non-formal within the origin community. The adults appear to live a strong frustration; they feel a kind of removal of their children of origins.*

4. Wellbeing for everybody as a condition of a society living in harmony

A strange phenomenon is more and more present within the borders of Europe (especially), but also of the other countries where the phenomenon of migration has reached higher levels. Unfortunately, the concept of *political correctness* determines a hide of the real feelings under the veil of silence, a silence which doesn't solve the issues, maybe even aggravate them.

Starting to the statement, without any doubt, that each person in this world has the right of preserving the original cultural, religious values, I do believe that this right is for everybody, both hosts and guests, both people belonging to the host countries and immigrants, to the same extent.

Nobody has the right to impose their values on others. This is valuable for the models that ask for assimilation of the newcomers but is also a truth for the reversal way. Unfortunately, the reality of the last years highlights the tendency of a reversal of the assimilation model: there are categories of immigrants appear as intending to impose their values to all the people surrounding them, natives or people who came previously of them. Interesting is the lack of reaction from the latter. Tolerance, understanding, love are concepts with two routes, with equal partners. Within each one family, religious community, national community the values are to be preserved, but in the commonplace of the wide society the balance, the common sense, the mutual understanding must be respected by everyone.

This is the only way to survive in peace in a world more and more multicultural. Otherwise, the recrudescence of extremism could be an unwanted consequence, with extremely dangerous effects upon human society as a whole

And, once again, education can be a leading actor: education for interculturality. Intercultural education should be understood as a complex process of mutual acceptance and value of what has, as specific treasures each person in this world; it means education for genuine mutual respect. All these are issues to be attentively considered and reconsidered in the wide philosophy of education of the third decade of the new millennium with peculiar effects on intercultural education, and finally upon the well-being of the human society as a whole.

The education must become an important tool, a field, an action to preserve the complex treasures of mankind's values.

New approaches of curricula reforms, of how to develop a strictly necessary competence of nowadays, the intercultural competence, all these are the directions to be approached, clarified and developed according to the real life of human society in its complex dynamic.

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