



DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES DURING HISTORY CLASS

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present some good practices for integrating Intercultural Education in History class. The activities presented in the article are developed during the ICTime course in Seixal, Portugal.

Key words: Intercultural Education, teaching History, Portuguese History.

1. Introduction

The cultural identity of a people is defined by common objective elements, such as language, history, customs, institutions, and by a subjective feeling of self-identification. The search for its identity is part of the maturation experience of each people.

History shows us the path to this search as it allows us to look for the roots that intersected and gave origin to what we are today. This historical drill of searching for our roots and cultural matrix that shakes the myths that we are a “pure” and “unique” people and that our identity is something that has remained unchanged since ancestral times. History underlines interactions and cultural transformations in time, on the level of a country or more countries. Thus the study of History and Languages is frequently connected with Intercultural Education.

In the case of Portugal the cultural identity of our country results from an amalgam of other cultures, who Portugal has contacted with, namely in the period of the Portuguese maritime expansion in the 15th and 18th centuries. In this period, interculturality was an outstanding trait and influenced our cultural patrimony and our collective identity.

Interculturality is a process associated with the Portuguese domination of territories in Africa, Asia and Brazil, due to the effective contact the Portuguese made with the local cultures. But this process also happened in the metropolis due to the way the objects, habits, beliefs entered the Portuguese society, leaving a legacy of cultural traits still visible nowadays in fields like music, art, gastronomy, science, etc. The portuguese culture is the result of mixtures of cultures. Therefore knowing the “other” assumes a fundamental historical importance not only to know our roots but also to fight against racism and xenophobia.

In this article there are presented some activities developed in the frame of the Comenius 2.1 project, ICTime. These activities propose to valorify interculturality some aspects of the History of Portugal.

2. Promoting Interculturality by Portuguese History teaching

Every culture develops in contact with other cultures. We speak of intercultural relations in the context of interaction and cultural cooperation between individuals or groups belonging to different ethnic groups, religions and cultures. Attempts to define interculturality refer to the concept of “culture” and are based on theoretical and practical considerations (Nedelcu, 2008, p. 9-25; Dassen, 1999, p. 21-31). The first refer to the philosophical, anthropological and ethical foundations of the concept of culture. Definitions belonging to the applicative domain refer to strategies used in intercultural education.

Intercultural relations are relations of cultural exchange, established in the context of respect for the specific of each cultural community. School has an important role in promoting intercultural relations in the society. Its efforts has to move towards an qualitative intercultural education.

Intercultural education is defined by Stephenson, Polechova & Willumsen (1999): *Intercultural Education for us means education that both in the content and process looks at differences and similarities among the cultures to understand them better, including our own culture. The differences are respected, and utilized as an advantage.*

The key ideas and concepts of intercultural education are (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Rey, 1986; Batelaan & Coomans, 1999):

- *recognition (awareness) of diversity and of interactions* that could appear in time and space between the multiple aspects of the same culture or between different cultures ;
- *respect of values, references, ways of life and symbolic representations* to which people (individuals or groups) compare in their relations with other persons and respect for all peoples, ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations;
- *challenge of interactions* between the diversity of representations and references ;
- *dialogue* between the different cultures, subcultures etc.
- *understanding and respect*;
- the *negation of racism and xenophobia*;
- *equal opportunities* (to make the education system more inclusive);
- *awareness* of the increasing interdependence between people and nations;
- *abilities to communicate* with others;
- awareness not only of the rights but also of the duties incumbent upon individuals, social groups and nations toward each other.

Intercultural education activities involve interaction and reflection, and may have different structures. According to Landis, Bennett & Bennett, (2003) a first model of intercultural education activities are based on the experiential learning cycle of Kolb (1984), see Figure 1.

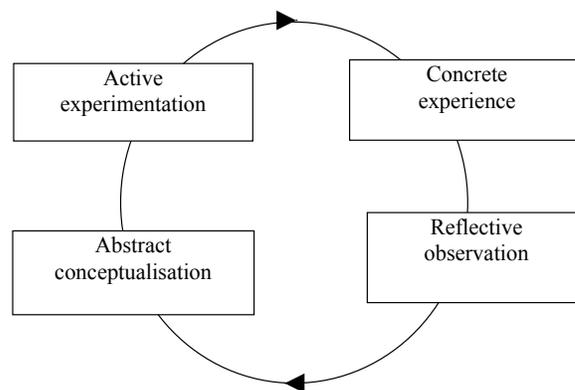


Figure 1. *The cycle of a learning activities which put in conection knowledge, actions and reflection*

In this model the action and reflection are present in different stages and have different weights depending on the complexity of the activity. Reflection is usually done at the middle of action, so it doesn't concern all approaches.

Kolb model differ from model "reflection in action" used by Nagata (2003) in her intercultural education activities. The approach of "reflection in action" is one iteration, processing experiences.

According to this model (Figure 2) in the "arc of projection" individual is projecting on the situation, acting on the world without distortions or bias and assumptions. The "arc of reflection" is the opportunity to analyze the results and their own prejudices and prepare for future action. This model, believes Nagata (2003), could be considered an intercultural learning cycle.

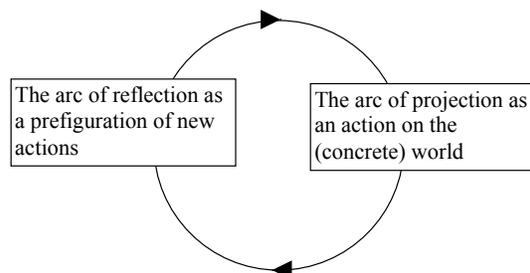


Figure 2. Gadamer's hermeneutic circle applied to human relations.
Adapted from Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) by Nagata (2003: 33)

The Kolb' model is useful in the situations of learning by doing. The Nagata' model is useful for learning through written statements, in which ideas and statements are everyone the subject of reflection. (Ciascai & Marchis, 2008)

3. Good practices in introducing intercultural education in History class

The main aim of the ICTime project is to use different type of media in intercultural education. Some models of activities using photos and films are presented in Marchis, Ciascai & Costa, 2008; Marchis, Ciascai & Sa Pereira, 2008; Marchis, Ciascai & Saial, 2008. In this article we present a selection of three activities integrating intercultural education in History class, using different type of media (film, picture, PowerPoint presentation). These activities were developed during the ICTime course organized in Seixal, Portugal in 2008.

Activity 1. The Maritime Discoveries and the Interculturality

Target group: 13-14 years old students.

Focus: The importance of the Portuguese discoveries to an intercultural world.

Objectives/Competences: Students are expected to:

- point out in time and space the main course of the peninsular maritime expansion;
- identify and characterize the main civilisations in Africa, Asia and America in the 15th – 16th centuries;
- understand the effects of those civilizations on the European expansionism and on the demographic, cultural and religious features;
- differentiate the occupation and economic exploitation forms implemented by Portugal in Africa, the Orient and Brazil;
- integrate the new international trade routes into the large European trade;
- highlight the importance of the main overseas distribution centres of goods (Lisbon, Seville, Antwerp and the Italian Republics);
- recognise Portugal's role in the enlargement of the Knowledge of the earth;
- develop tolerance and respect attitudes towards other peoples and cultures;
- raise interest in studying the period when Portugal played a pioneering role in the knowledge of the World (discoveries, conquests, mission work and acculturation);
- sensitise to the refusal of discriminations.

- recognise the need to be integrated into an intercultural world;
- recognise Portugal's role within the European Union;
- carry out small research works, individually or in pairs, on African, Asian and Amerindian civilizations, in the 15th and 16th centuries;
- interpret several documents (papers, images, and maps), with diversified messages;
- express hypothesis for the interpretation of historical events based on several sources.

Time: 90 minutes.

Resources: laptop; video projector; interactive whiteboard, school's computer platform; film made by the teacher; student's handbook, worksheets.

Steps of the activity:

- the pupils watch the film entitled "Maritime Discoveries and Interculturality";
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about the presented film;
- the pupils solve a matching exercise between historical events and dates (as consolidation of contents) on the interactive board;
- the teacher draw up on the interactive board a chronology of the main stages of the Portuguese maritime expansion;
- the pupils analyze the map representing the "World Trade in the 16th century" from the students' handbook;
- the pupils draw a map on the interactive board, with the Portuguese and Spanish territories, and the respective trade routes in the 16th century;
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about how maritime discoveries influenced the Portuguese culture, how Portuguese people interacted with the local people during these discoveries;
- the pupils make group of four and discuss how would they interact with a very traditional tribe in Africa, if they are on a discovery travel;
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about how an intercultural interaction should be;
- the pupils make comments on the film watched in this class. This activity should be done at home, as homework. To do so, students must be connected to the school's computer platform and should answer to three questions in the forum, created for this purpose.

Reflection/Evaluation: The teacher will do a formative evaluation based on direct observation in the classroom (oral participation and written records, resulting from the proposed activities). He/she will also evaluate the intervention outside the class, because students will participate in a forum, on the computer platform, on the film they watched in the classroom. Learning will be evaluated through evaluation tests in this unit.

Activity 2. The Portuguese Expansion in a Context of Interculturality

Target group: 13-14 years old students.

Focus: The Meeting of worlds

Objectives/Competences: Students are expected to:

- develop attitudes of respect and tolerance towards other people from different cultures;
- show respect for the human being;
- understand the contribution of Portuguese trips to the knowledge of the world;
- acknowledge the changes that the Expansion caused in Portugal and in the world;
- acknowledge the settlers, merchants and missionaries' role in establishing cultural exchanges;
- acknowledge ethical values in individual actions;
- identify positive and negative aspects of the meeting of worlds (miscegenation; discovering others; exchanging techniques and knowledge; slavery);
- show interest in the preservation of the historical and cultural patrimony.

Time: 90 minutes.

Resources: student's book, film made by the teacher, laptop, video projector, and interactive whiteboard.

Steps of the activity:

- the teacher presents the Portuguese diaspora in the 15th and 16th centuries, mobilising previous knowledge and focussing dialogue on the peoples' diversity and cultural exchanges;
- the pupils watch a film made by the teacher "Expansion and interculturality – The meeting of worlds";
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about the presented film;
- the pupils read the text "Meninos de todas as cores" (Children of all colours) by Luísa Ducla Soares;
- each pupil writes on the interactive board an attitude he/she considers the most important when interacting with peoples who are different from us in some sense;
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about what attitudes we should take towards people who are different from us and who think differently from us;
- as homework, the pupils write an essay about what attitudes we should take towards people who are different from us and who think differently from us.

Reflection/Evaluation: Observation focussed on the ability to acknowledge contributions/changes deriving from the relations among peoples. Evaluation of the essays written by students.

Activity 3. Interculturality in Portuguese Art

Target group: 10-11 years old students.

Focus: The importance of the Portuguese discoveries to an intercultural world.

Objectives/Competences: Students are expected to:

- acknowledge the existence of interculturality in Portuguese art;
- develop attitudes of respect and tolerance towards other people from different cultures;
- to explain and highlight elements of the historical Portuguese heritage;
- to respect peoples with other cultures.

Contents: Medieval Art (Gothic); "Manuelino" Art; Renaissance Art; Romantic Art; Neoclassical Art; Naturalist Art; Art of the twentieth century.

Time: 45 minutes.

Resources: some literature books (from the school's library), some pictures with Portuguese art pieces; PowerPoint presentation made by the teacher, laptop, video projector, and interactive whiteboard.

Steps of the activity:

- the teacher shows the PowerPoint presentation about interculturality in the Portuguese Art;
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about the content of the presentation;
- the pupils form groups of three; each group gets a picture with a piece of Portuguese art (picture, sculpture; building, etc.) and discusses which elements of the art work shows interactions with other cultures;
- the teacher guide a dialogue to explore pupils' ideas about how interactions with different cultures during the History influence the art.

Reflection/Evaluation: The teacher will do a formative evaluation based on direct observation in the classroom (oral participation and written records, resulting from the proposed activities).

Suggestion for teachers: This activity is likely to be accomplished not only by History teachers, but also for Language or Art teachers. If the students are interested in the subject, this activity can be completed with a visit to a museum (National Museum of Ethnology, for example). May also be the

starting point of a more comprehensive project that includes literature, music, dance and theater, from a perspective of interculturality.

Conclusion

Education is no doubt one of the areas where numerous victories can be achieved. In fact, it isn't an easy task but it is definitely one of the paths to follow due to its structural influence on the preparation of future citizens. History plays a crucial role as it allows understanding the multiplicity of facts and interrelations that exist in the studied events, being at the same time a guideline in the complexity of the current world, making the student appreciate diversity and adopt attitudes of respect and solidarity towards the others. Thus, history allows the acquisition and development of values allied to the anti-dogmatic spirit, tolerance and solidarity inherent to the development of a global and intercultural society, the underlying theme of the training course in which the current work is inserted.

Many teachers think, that intercultural education can't be integrated in their subject. Thus it is important to disseminate good practices of realizing intercultural education during lessons of different subject. The activities presented above show, that intercultural education could be well integrated in History classes. Another aspect they show is that the use of digital media helps not only to teach History in a more attractive way, but also to do intercultural education in a more effective way. The presented activities require the use of some media (film, PowerPoint presentation, images, etc.) made by the teacher. Thus many teachers could be reticent to these activities mainly for two reasons: they consider that is very time consuming to make all the materials and/or they don't know how to do it. This underline that it is importance to organize training courses for teachers in the field of ICT in education.

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