

Chapter 4

Key Concepts for Intercultural Approaches



1 Introduction

The use of intercultural approaches in education cannot be carried out without the educational actors' appropriation of a certain number of fundamental concepts (Robles de Meléndez & Beck, 2009). In this chapter we will discuss many of the principal concepts such as culture, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, equality and difference. This list is obviously not exhaustive, since several other concepts could have been included, such as otherness, diversity, dialogue or even universalism.

The notions and theories that underpin these concepts help us to understand social and educational reality. When dealing with cultural diversity, concepts allow us to see the social world from a different perspective so as to concentrate on the individual aspects of which it is composed: identity, relationships between groups, etc. Concepts can also be understood as printed cards reproducing simple mental images of social reality. They are tools ensuring a clear passage as much for the practitioner as for the researcher.

2 Culture, Cultural Identity and Biculturalism

The concept of culture is an anthropological creation of the twentieth century occupying a primary place in the human and social sciences, and situated at the heart of intercultural approaches to education. It is therefore necessary to determine what this concept can elucidate as phenomena, but also to indicate the risks and limits in its use.

It should be made clear that it is indeed the anthropological definition of culture that underpins its use in the context of intercultural approaches. As emphasized by Doutreloux (1990), culture is a system of representations unique to human beings. It gives coherence, sense and meaning to individual and collective life. Cultures do not differ by their content, or not a great deal, but rather in the way the content is

organized, connected and ranked. For Lévi-Strauss (2014), it has “multiple features” (p. 37) which can lead to closer or more distant relationships between cultures.

For the American anthropologist Geertz et al. (1973), culture is a model of meanings incorporating symbols that have been transmitted throughout history. It therefore consists of a system of inherited concepts expressed in symbolic form by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. Culture is public property because systems of meanings basically belong to a particular group of people.

Misra and Gergen (1993) point out the importance of transmission in the definition of culture:

...culture is a historically situated, collective product constituted by the values, beliefs, perceptions, symbols, and other humanly created artifacts which are transmitted across generations through language and other mediums.... Culture is simultaneously a product of human action as well as a determinant of future action, a composite of meanings and associated traditions, which define, inform, and constitute the range of our understandings and investments (Misra & Gergen, 1993, p. 226).

And, indeed, here the idea of *group* is particularly important since culture is linked to the question of social affiliation and to the socialization of individuals (Lüsebrink, 1998). Elsewhere, Rocher (2005, quoted by Verbunt, 2011) says on this subject that culture and what it contains is involved in the consolidation of “people into a particular and distinct community” (p. 65). Thus, it allows a group, a nation, a society to be distinguished by its own cluster of cultural practices or system of representations (language, religion, political structure, education, cooking, clothes, architecture, etc.). These different symbols are more or less visible and identifiable by someone outside the group. The image of the iceberg often used as a metaphor for culture is an illustration of its complexity and epitomizes the existence of visible and invisible cultural characteristics.

Despite the importance of the collective nature in the idea of culture, it is essential to reserve a place for the individual in it. We will see later in this book that the relationship to own culture and to other cultures creates one’s identity and one’s relationship with the world. In this way, individual strategies should be considered when analysing cultural membership.

It is also in the way that cultural practices are ordered and structured in a given context that allows the concept of culture to be approached (Guillaumin, 1994). It is therefore necessary to combine references to social belonging, to individual subjectivity and to the context to understand the matter of culture. For example, for a teacher to welcome and integrate pupils from a different culture means not only considering them as bearers of particular cultural characteristics (language, religion, family structure, social situation, migrant status, etc.) but also to place them in a productive situation linking the various characteristics and their relationship to the school context. Furthermore, it is essential to grasp and to understand the way the migrant pupil lives, perceives and interprets the host country. It is equally vital to understand the parallels, the compromises, the linkages and bridges that the pupil makes between the different cultures.

Culture is not a catalogue of fixed features; it displays symbols, links, hierarchies, contradictions, tensions, borrowings from other cultures and on-going improvisation. Porcher (1994) describes quite correctly the dynamic character of a culture, its capacity to adapt and to transform itself:

The deep historical roots of a culture, its enduring transmitted qualities, its heritage are obviously essential in understanding it, even if it is not necessary to master them to function. They lead to grasping the hybrid character of any culture, its mottled, striped, harlequin nature. The legacy always has a miscellany of origins, which does not in any way prevent it from being unique, distinctive, owned by those who are however merely its custodians (Porcher, 1994, p. 10).

It is therefore important to beware of any essentialist and fixed concept of culture. To essentialize a culture, that is restricting it merely to some of its features (for example, language or religion), does not permit a true understanding. Its elements form “an indissociable ensemble constantly declined in a variable way, according to the memory and the aspirations of each individual” (Stenou, 2007, p. 424). Cultural essentialism may result in a dangerous aberration likely to provoke a cultural drift towards ethnicity or race, leading to a confrontation between “those who are like us” and “those who are not” (Dervin & Machart, 2015). Essentialism tends to remove us from a dynamic and evolutive vision of the concept of culture necessary for the calm development of intercultural approaches (Ferréol, 2015).

Identity is a key concept in intercultural approaches due to the complicated network of relationships surrounding individuals and their environment. It is crucial in the child’s development and in learning (Erikson, 1968). Intercultural approaches solicit at the same time the right to cultural identity, which might appear to be multiple, but at the same time they accept lapses, nomadism and cultural hybridization.

From a global point of view, cultural identity may be considered as a construction in which individuals order their perceptions, descriptions and self-evaluation in relation to their environment or certain precise contexts (particularly cultural). The central idea is that identity is the outcome of an individual construction process and, in this way, is flexible, changeable and dynamic. Thus, the idea of multiple identities is key in the development of intercultural approaches to education, since it promotes an individual’s negotiation, contestation, modelling or remodelling of identities (Brinton, Kagan, & Bauckus, 2017).

The dynamism of culture and the subjectivity of individuals is reflected in their identities. One could then propose that cultural identity is “both stable and on the move” (Charaudeau, 2016, p. 33) and that it is better approached through the term “identity strategy” (Lipiansky, 2000).

For example, a child who has inherited two cultures through a mixed marriage or by migration (the parents’ culture and the culture of the host country) may acquire a bi- or multicultural identity allowing trouble-free upbringing. Biculturalism or multiculturalism provide access to several cultures (usually the original culture and that of the host country) and the capacity to transfer freely from one to the other. This applies not only to immigrants arriving from other countries but also to the children of immigrants who, while born and brought up in the host society, are also soundly rooted in their family’s culture of origin. These situations can also apply

to people belonging to ethnic minorities where the inherited culture needs to be maintained, in one way or another, from one generation to the next. Biculturalism or multiculturalism may represent for individuals a psychological and social tool for adaptation (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Nevertheless, Maalouf (1998) draws attention to the complexity and the possible negative impact of multiple identities. He describes the interaction of a bicultural individual with the world, which sometimes might have the tendency to reduce “the whole identity to a single affiliation” (Maalouf, 1998, p. 11). We will show in this book that the processes of acquisition, perception and belonging are not straightforward and can be the outcome of complicated manoeuvres.

It is therefore essential for those involved in education and researchers, when speaking about migrant pupils, to avoid any temptation to use inappropriate metaphors such as “they are caught between two stools” or “they have no idea where they are!”. Rather, we recommend an approach designed to make the pupils’ cultures legitimate, while not forcing upon them a cultural affiliation based on fundamentally essentialist beliefs.

Scientific literature sometimes presents a contrast between “individualist culture” and “collectivist culture” (Hofstede, 1994; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Triandis, 1994), or between “monochrome cultures”¹ and “polychrome cultures”² (Clément & Girardin, 1997; Hall, 2003). These differences can be useful in the framework of intercultural communication but underestimate, on the one hand, the variety of social groups in each culture and, on the other, the confinement of individuals in a globalizing and immutable cultural sphere.

In relation to the question of cultural identity, intercultural approaches speak in favour of the individuals’ true autonomy in the choice of their cultural identity or identities.

This liberty for each individual to choose his/her own identity could act as a protective mechanism when the status (particularly migratory) is associated with an uncertain situation.

It is important for the school to adopt a flexible attitude towards children and young people from foreign backgrounds leaving them the possibility of taking responsibility for and living several cultural identities. While not underestimating the possibility that some young migrant children might experience their double cultural affiliation with difficulty, it seems sufficient to us to emphasize that most of them have no trouble combining the identity inherited from their parents with that acquired in the host country, as well as many other affiliations linked to youth culture and global social networks.

Concerning these initial definitions of the key concepts, it is important that the reader is able to identify the problems connected with culture and cultural affiliation, while interpreting them in a relativist manner. The concepts help us in interpreting reality and in understanding it better. Still, the vitality of culture and cultural identities

¹ Time is managed in a linear way and the individual carries out one task after another.

² Time is managed in a circular fashion and the individual carries out several tasks at the same time.

makes the total generalization of words concerning the choice of affiliations or the acquisition of a culture impossible. As Bachler puts it (2018), culture is a labyrinth:

Culture is a labyrinth, with its circuitous byways and sometimes dead ends. Nevertheless, it is by travelling along them that we create what we are. Well, perhaps it is wiser to maintain culture as a labyrinth and not attempt to make it reflect our civil status, nor to ask it to take care of our identity papers (Bachler, 2018, p. 29).

3 Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Ethnocentrism, which is an attitude common to all cultures, consists of assuming that one's culture of origin is the model for all humanity. This is equivalent to considering the way of life or of thinking, the customs and the beliefs of the culture to which one belongs to be the best or are "the norm" compared to other practices, which are inevitably not normal.

As Herskovits and Vaudou (1967) stated it:

Ethnocentrism is the attitude of those who believe their own manner of living is preferable to any other. As the logical follow-up to the process of "enculturation" during their childhood, most people acquire this feeling about their culture, whether they express it or not (Herskovits & Vaudou, 1967, p. 61).

For each individual, ethnocentrism allows other cultures to be evaluated and interpreted according to a yardstick unique to one's own culture (Montaigne, 1965). Ethnocentrism might imply value judgements concerning other individuals coming from cultures whose practices are incomprehensible to oneself, because they are misunderstood. Eating habits are a good illustration of this concept, since normally we are able to eat everything as long as we have been socialized (encultured) from childhood to certain culinary practices. At the same time, we are tempted to express swift judgements of disapproval about the eating habits of other cultures or other peoples. At school, textbooks give a good illustration of the tendency towards ethnocentrism, especially through the choice of maps (very often focusing on the country where the textbook was produced and on the type of projection used to present the map) or the biased presentation of national history compared to that of other peoples and cultures (Blondin, 1990; Preiswerk & Perrot, 1975). The production of world maps also illustrates the manner in which some nations indicate their superiority towards others. Mercator's projection is the most common. First created in the sixteenth century, it allows a biased representation of countries' and continents' sizes with the psychological objective of conveying the idea that the West was the most powerful entity (Harley, 2009). On the other hand, if the Peters' projection had been used, in which the proportions of each continent are respected, Africa would be much bigger than Europe (Harley, 2009). The maps therefore reflect the game of knowledge and power (Harley, 2009).

Concerning ethnocentrism, it seems to us essential to distinguish between defensive ethnocentrism and offensive ethnocentrism. Defensive ethnocentrism reflects a group's wishes, when threatened by assimilation or colonialism, to preserve its

unique culture, its language or any other feature of its historical heritage. This form of ethnocentrism can be observed in all cultures, both minority and majority ones. For example, the speakers of European regional languages may adopt defensive ethnocentrism to show their desire to protect their languages faced with the steam roller of national and international languages. In the same way, the survival of indigenous peoples is at present threatened by the thoughtless exploitation of their natural environment. They may therefore express defensive ethnocentrism by attempting to preserve their way of life and their ancient cultural heritage.

On the other hand, offensive ethnocentrism, closely associated with colonialism and imperialism, takes the form of individuals (or a community or a country) who consider their values and cultural features not only as the best, but also the ones that should be adopted by choice or by force by other peoples and cultures.

Eurocentrism, a variant of ethnocentrism, is another concept unfavourable to intercultural approaches. According to Parekh (2000), Eurocentrism is based on the two following hypotheses: on the one hand, the first modern European civilizations arising since the seventeenth century represent the highest form of social life ever attained by humanity until that time and are the universal standards by which all others should be judged; on the other hand, it reached this moment of glory without the contribution of any non-European civilizations and therefore owes little to other civilizations. Three fundamental influences have fashioned European civilization. Its intellectual and political foundations were laid by classic Athens and Rome, both assumed to be exclusively European creations. Its moral and religious foundations were posed by Christianity which, although not European in origin, was radically remodelled in the light of the Greco-Roman heritage and only became a force for progress after undergoing much cultural modification in European hands. Its third major influence was the rise of individualism, secularism, science and technology, etc., all of which are believed to be unique achievements of modern Europe arising from its heritage.

The convergence of Western thought and ways of knowing with Eurocentric colonialism resulted in the imposition of a hierarchical articulation of difference (e.g. “civilized/uncivilized,” “modern/primitive,” “expert knowledge/general knowledge,” “development/underdevelopment,” “favoured/condemned,” “European/Other,” “White/Other”) to the benefit of the ruling classes. Western/modern social science was built upon this conceptualization of the world and has served to justify and naturalize this world order as “the way things are done” (Cruz & Sonn, 2015, p. 131).

Transferred to the educational domain, Eurocentrism consists of assigning to the school the tasks of encouraging the skills, attitudes, values and frames of mind that created, underpin and are dear to European civilization, including the capacity of critical and independent thinking, individualism and a scientific approach, without any reference to the contribution of others (Parekh, 2000).

A priority objective of intercultural approaches in education throughout the world is to oppose the typical (natural) tendency of educational actors to assume ethnocentric behaviour. An acceptance of cultural relativism is therefore necessary to implement intercultural approaches in education. Cultural relativism consists of analysing and evaluating the behaviour of individuals from different cultures on

the basis of one's own references and cultural contexts. It demands both a certain familiarity with other countries (history, character, organization and structuring of its typical features, complexity, etc.) but also cognitive flexibility necessary to appreciate difference and otherness. Anthropologists, through their long residences in and their minute observations of far-flung societies, have shown the coherence of their social organization and have favoured the development of cultural relativism, in other words openness to the Other, to difference and the ability to understand and tolerate different cultural coherences, without establishing a hierarchy among them.

If cultural relativism is therefore necessary, it becomes dangerous if it is pushed towards absolutism. Indeed, absolute (or radical) cultural relativism consists of justifying and accepting all behaviours associated with a culture. This failure to distance oneself and lack of consideration are not favourable to intercultural approaches in education. Thus, female excision and other similar cultural practices cannot be justified with arguments about cultural relativism. If the reliance on scientific knowledge and democratic discussion allows certain practices to be challenged, it makes no sense to want to maintain them or to make them "sacred" in the name of absolute cultural relativism.

Another concrete example concerns equality between men and women or personal rights, which cannot be denied in the name of cultural or religious specificity. Radical or absolute cultural relativism encourages the right to isolation and an over-idealization of cultures. It can deny individuals the right to belong to a universal human culture and forces them to remain imprisoned in a value system that resists all change (Abou, 1992). To use, once again, the splendid phrase of the French anthropologist Françoise Héritier, cultural relativism should be relativized by suggesting that the difficult path of political emancipation travelled by Europe since the Age of Enlightenment may be followed by other cultures (Héritier, 2008). The matter of relativism places stress on the question of recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity. Its excesses and its absences may both lead to us losing our way.

In short, all the richness of intercultural approaches is associated with the need for a complex, fragile and never accomplished balance between recognition and approval of cultural differences, but also the need for all individuals to live under the rule of law based on equality, dignity and liberty.

Intercultural approaches must be conceived as tools to reflect upon and develop the educational practices aimed at awareness and taking a stand so as to work towards a greater responsibility for ourselves and others. They must help us to oppose essentialist visions of identity and culture, and combat the forced ethnicization of others imprisoning them in a caricatural image. They will promote the move from a natural ethnocentrism to a reflective ethnocentrism by encouraging respect and the pursuit of differences (Costanzo & Vignac, 2001). Intercultural approaches are fundamentally the necessary steps for crossing cultural frontiers and holding a dialogue.

4 Equality, Difference and Social Justice

Let us now turn to the importance of the concept of equality in the emergence of intercultural approaches in education. It should be recalled that the arrival of mass compulsory schooling at the end of the nineteenth century was designed to achieve equal treatment for all individuals in the education system. It was therefore a marked improvement compared to the former education system reserved for the most favoured social groups. It was also a step forward for those societies in which social reproduction was carried out in a hereditary manner through a system of castes or clans.

Compulsory school attendance for all the children of a generation marks the beginning of a founding act for modern democracies and a step forward in the history of humanity: school achievement would determine, in principle, the place individuals would occupy in society. In the period 1950–1960, the sociology of education showed that the principle of meritocracy was closer to a founding myth rather than a proven outcome. In fact, formal equal treatment of individuals in the education system hides their selection and the reproduction of social inequality by a school that claims to be emancipatory (Perrenoud, 1984). According to Bourdieu (1966), this allows the school to remain conservative:

Formal equality that governs educational practice serves in fact as a disguise and a justification for indifference towards the real inequalities facing education and facing the culture taught or, more correctly, demanded (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 366).

By treating all pupils in the same manner, one automatically strengthens those whose cultural and linguistic experiences are closest to those of the school culture. In the English-speaking literature, the concept of “colour-blindness” is used to describe the attitude of teachers who call themselves impartial when faced with their pupils’ cultural or colour differences (and therefore possibly of origin as well). In adopting formal equality for all and indifference to differences, this attitude can in fact be prejudicial to children (Blaisdell, 2005).

It also seems useful to us to recall that the concept of equality at the school covers at least three aspects: equality of access to the school; equality during the learning processes; and equality of the pupils’ learning outcomes. If it is possible to act on the first aspect by making the school open to all, it is much more difficult to act on the second and to influence the third. The responsibility of the teachers and the parents is partially invoked for the second and third aspects.

In a complimentary attitude to the work of the educational sociologist (analysing the inequalities in the school and in knowledge), intercultural approaches in education reinstate the legitimacy of the idea of cultural difference and the need to find a satisfactory way of dealing with it in the school. As Camilleri (1985) emphasized, individuals manage to mark their difference as a positive feature of their identity if it is accepted and recognized by others. As a result, intercultural approaches today seem more sensitive to education for cultural difference than to an education for those who are culturally different (Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

In short, the concepts of difference and equality allow the contributions and the limitations of intercultural approaches in education to be established. As de Souza Santos (1999) rightly stated: “We have the right to equality each time our difference places us in a situation of inferiority, in the same way that we always have the right to be different each time that equality attempts to strip us of our own characteristics” (p. 45).³ Hence the necessity of an equality which recognizes differences—a differentiation that is not a source of inequality.

Mellouki (2004) recalls correctly that recognizing the Other is all very well, but taking that person and treating them as an equal is another matter.

The purely theoretical recognition of the other is not sufficient to eliminate communication barriers as long as they are not present in my concrete behaviour, as long as they do serve as my guide in my daily encounters with others, as long as they do not help me interpret the exact meaning of what is said and done, as long as it does not force me *de facto* to consider him as my equal and to copy his way of thinking, to be and to act for what they are, that is to say for cultural models that are neither better nor less good than those dictated to me by the society and culture within which I was raised (Mellouki, 2004, pp. 13–14).

Social justice is both a process and a desirable objective for the school and society. The objective of social justice is to achieve the full and equal participation of individuals drawn from all of society’s social groups, which is reciprocally structured to respond to their needs. The process of reaching the objective of social justice must be democratic and participative, respecting human diversity and differences. This inclusive process emphasizes the capacity of human beings to work together in a collaborative manner in order to change society. Social justice requires a world in which the distribution of resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable, where individuals are physically and psychologically secure, accepted and treated with respect (Adams & Bell, 2016). It is therefore vital for teachers to take up the objective of “social justice” in their daily work in the classroom. It seems to us that this concept is far more concrete than the idea of “equality of opportunity”, which is nevertheless omnipresent in institutional deliberations.

Intercultural approaches have available solid conceptual foundations if they succeed in uniting the concepts of equality, diversity, difference and social justice (Manning, Baruth, & Lee, 2017), but one should be careful not to exaggerate equality due to the risk of ending up with indifference. Furthermore, one should not overestimate or exaggerate diversity/difference so as to avoid ending up with culturalization or with the essentialization of cultures (Ogay & Edelman, 2011). It is only in a relationship of positive tension between equality and diversity that intercultural approaches may advance (Ogay & Edelman, 2011).

³ “Temos o direito de ser iguais quando a nossa diferença nos inferioriza; e temos o direito de ser diferentes quando a nossa igualdade nos descaracteriza. Daí a necessidade de uma igualdade que reconheça as diferenças e de uma diferença que não produza, alimente ou reproduza as desigualdades” (p. 45).

5 Assimilation, Integration and Recognition

The concept of assimilation has a long history in the social sciences. The sociologists of the Chicago School, particularly Park, have used it to analyse the relationship between different ethnic groups. Park (1939, 1950) defines assimilation as a movement of disorganization/reorganization, of interpenetrations and fusion through which people acquire the memories, feelings and attitudes of Others by sharing their experiences, their history and by accommodation into a common cultural life.

Other more recent works have shown in the vast majority of cases that immigrants are assimilated to the norms and values of the host societies by the second or third generation (Todd, 1994; Tribalat, 1995). In French sociology, assimilation has a different meaning to the one defined by Park: “Assimilation implies the resorption and reduction of the migrants’ typical social, cultural and religious practices” (Tribalat, 1995, p. 13) to the benefit of a majority or dominant culture.

Assimilation is therefore defined as an injunction for the immigrants (ethno-cultural minorities) to observe the host society’s norms (the dominant society), the expression of their original socio-cultural identity and its idiosyncrasies being relegated to the private sphere. During the process of assimilation, the gaining of nationality or citizenship,⁴ conceived as an “irreversible” commitment in the host society, assumes capital importance.

Assimilation is a process leading a group or an individual belonging to an ethno-cultural minority to adhere strictly to the dominant group’s behaviours and values. It is an irreversible process resulting in the loss of unique cultural characteristics for a dominated minority population, colonized or strongly influenced by the majority group. During assimilation, the acceptance of the Other implies the abandonment of difference or cultural specificity. In other words, Others may be accepted without discrimination but on condition that their own identity (cultural identity) is abandoned and that they adopt totally and rapidly the host society’s values and behaviour. Assimilation has a negative connotation since it means wanting to eclipse one culture for the benefit of another.

In social psychology, integration takes shape through all the interactions among the members of a group, stimulating a sense of identification with the group and its values (Grawitz, 1999). In sociology, it bears witness to a higher level of social cohesion within the society (Durkheim, 1897/2007). In the educational domain, the concept of integration was used firstly in the field of handicap, subsequently being transposed at the end of the 1970s to intercultural approaches in education as a replacement for the concept of assimilation, which had fallen out of favour. Integration has gradually become the principal concept to define educational and social policies aimed at immigrants or cultural minorities and their children, but also to analyse their situation

⁴ In some situations (France, for example), the nation (nationality) is merged with citizenship. In contrast, in multinational States (Russia, for example), generally organized into a federal political system, there is not a single citizenship but several nationalities are possible depending on the nation to which a person belongs.

in relation to the host society. Thus, we speak of people or groups that have been well or badly integrated.

Integration means to introduce a new element into an ensemble (a society, a nation). Integrated individuals also change the group into which they have been included. The idea of interaction is therefore at the core of this process. Integration is a process creating an opportunity for ethnocultural minorities to participate actively in economic, social and cultural life. Today, the success of integration is ultimately measured through the participation of minority groups in political life. Integration does not relieve the host society from examining its own values. Neither does it mean that the ethnocultural minority should give up all of its cultural practices, but requires on its part a certain flexibility and desire to adapt. Integration is therefore an open process which functions over the long term. It makes the ambitious wager to succeed, eventually, in creating a fruitful hybrid and the possibility of living together wisely in both society and the school.

Through the reading of political works, one can conclude that the concept of integration is open to different interpretations. Take, for example, the case of the Haut Conseil français à l'intégration (HCI—Supreme French Council for Integration). This political body, founded in 1989 (and dissolved in 2012/2013), had as its objective to clarify “matters concerning the integration of foreign residents or those of foreign origin” (HCI, 2009). For this reason, HCI was particularly interested in the concept of integration, as well as in its different procedures. In 1993, a report defined integration as a process likely to encourage the active social participation of all men and women expected to live in France over the long term. This participation implies the acceptance, without any reservations, that particularities may continue to exist, especially cultural ones. However, the report recommended encouraging cultural convergence so as to strengthen social cohesion (here it is possible to notice a concept of integration originating with Durkheim) (HCI, 1993). In one of this political body's last reports (in 2011), integration is analysed not through the lens of social integration and cohesion, but through truly measurable criteria; these were, particularly, insertion into the job market, access to housing (defined as “an unmistakable sign of the desire for integration”) (HCI, 2011, p. 25), the rate of exogamy (marriage between a French native and someone of foreign extraction) and the acquisition of national citizenship (HCI, 2011). Here, integration is perceived through a largely practical lens. These four pointers can, to a certain extent, demonstrate a degree of social cohesion, while the qualitative question of interaction between the host society and foreigners (or people of foreign origin) seems to occupy a less important place.

Furthermore, an extract from this report demonstrates a conceptual merger between integration and assimilation: “All foreigners, whatever difficulties they have been faced with, have been progressively integrated *to the extent that* they have blended into the French nation, both themselves and, what is more, their descendants” (HCI, 2011, p. 21). The idea that foreigners “blend” into the nation would seem to reduce their former affiliation leading to the necessity of adopting totally the majority culture.

These examples show the need of placing the concepts of assimilation and integration in a national historical and political context. Thus, in France, it can be noted that

the term “integration” is sometimes used in the same way as the former republican assimilation. In the United States, the current use of the word “mainstreaming” is also close to integration, while it possesses at the same time a meaning which recalls both “assimilation” and “standardization”.

The concept of integration does not always affect the social sphere in a global way; it can form part of more precise dimensions, such as educational policies. Here, we will take the example of Quebec. In fact, the question of integrating pupils with migrant backgrounds occupies an important place in the province’s educational policies. In the manner of the “Plan d’action en matière d’intégration scolaire et d’éducation interculturelle, 1998–2002” [Action plan for educational integration and intercultural education], various documents published by the Ministry of Education posed questions about the integration of migrant pupils and suggested some answers. Three dimensions were established as making up the integration process: command of the language (linguistic integration); success in the school (educational integration); and social integration (“the establishment of significant links with the host society’s members, as well as the learning of its cultural values, standards and references” (Ministère de l’Éducation de Québec, 1998, p. 5)). In this way, educational integration represents one dimension in the process of adaptation, which “is not achieved until the migrant person or his/her descendants participate fully in all the host society’s community life and have acquired a feeling of belonging in this regard” (MCCI, 1990a, p. 16, quoted by Labelle, Field and Icart, 2007, p. 19).

It is necessary to understand the concept of integration as a process accepting the existence as well as the persistence of cultural characteristics in minority or migrant populations. It is in this way that they are clearly independent of the assimilation process, which aims at the disappearance of cultural characteristics. Gibson (1988) estimates that integration corresponds to a conversion without assimilation.

On the other hand, it is necessary to insist on collective responsibility which underpins the concept of integration (Obin & Obin-Coulon, 1999). In this respect, it is particularly the integrative capacity of certain groups or cultural spaces which is called into question (Obin & Obin-Coulon, 1999). Integration should then be understood as a process consisting of two dimensions: the first, more objective, to a certain extent voluntary, includes participation in constraining structures (professional activities, social and political institutions) and the adoption of common standards (model family, language, social behaviour, etc.); the second, more subjective, even affective, takes the form of the development of a sense of belonging to the same community of destiny. However, one should not place responsibility for the integration process wholly on the individual from the minority or migrant group—the implicit or explicit signals communicated by the host society influence the process. It is interesting, for example, to observe how refugees from South-East Asia (the Boat People) were welcomed with open arms by European societies in the 1980s, while African migrants are at present abandoned in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Even if it is true that the historical and political contexts are different between these two situations, they do not have the same effect on the process of integrating migrant people; for this reason, we stress the dynamic dimension of this process and consider the signals sent by host societies during its analysis.

For Sayad (1994), integration is the type of process that can only be discussed afterwards in the form of a *modus operandi*, merely to say whether it succeeded or failed. It is a process which consists ideally of passing from the most radical otherness to the most complete identity (or intended as such). It is a process during which one knows when it has ended and how. There was no doubt in Sayad's (1994) mind that the discussion on integration is inevitably a discussion about identity—one's own identity and the identity of others—and, in the final analysis, on the unequal balance of power that these identities are engaged in. It is a discussion, not of truth, but producing the effect of truth.

To conclude, it is necessary to recall that the concept of integration as it is understood today has inherited other similar meanings, such as those of adaptation and assimilation (Sayad, 1994). Each one of these meanings wants to be original but, in reality, they are only different expressions, at different times, in different contexts and for different social usages of the same idea, which consists of developing a certain type of social cohesion (always politically tainted).

The concept of minority, much employed in the English-speaking literature, is employed to analyse the situation of groups searching for recognition and equality. According to Meunier (2007), this concept may be defined as a community formed on the basis of a real or imagined common origin. This minority could easily be ethnic, cultural, religious, national, regional or sexual. This concept does not necessarily refer to groups with a limited membership, but particularly to historically dominated collective ensembles.

In some national contexts, the terms "ethnic minority" or "ethnocultural minority" are used. The meaning of ethnic comes from the Greek *ethnos*: "a class of people of the same origin and condition". This term is used for a grouping of individuals who have common characteristics. Today, numerous theoreticians concerned with cultural diversity (especially North American) consider that all minorities should be included in the process of recognition and they therefore include all of them in their thinking (see, particularly, Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

Taylor (1994) considers that any policy on difference results in a demand for the recognition of minorities so that there should not be any second-class citizens. The alleged neutral collection of principles of political dignity blind to differences would be the reflection of a supremacist culture, since only minorities and oppressed cultures are obliged to assume a foreign form. What underlies the demand for recognition is the principle of universal equality. The policy of difference denounces all forms of discrimination and refuses any second-class citizenship (Taylor, 1994). To the extent that equality is sought, it is important to request it for, if we are all different, we should also all be equal.

The question of recognition of minorities may be divisive. In fact, for some, it risks opening the way to communitarianism⁵ in the functioning of public life, and

⁵ Communitarianism: a belief that communities formed on the basis of cultural, religious or social affiliations should live in small self-governing units. In some countries (for example, France), the idea of community is used as a foil against multiculturalism.

will terminate in the weakening of social and national cohesion in favour of isolated communities. For others, the recognition by society and in political will for all the minorities is a way of becoming aware of the injustices that some cultural groups may suffer (Schnapper, 1992). For Ogay and Edelheim (2011), to push equality to its limits would result in indifference to differences; on the contrary, to exaggerate diversity could end up with culturalization or the essentialization of cultures. In the same way, de Souza Santos (1999) and Ogay and Edelheim (2011) propose a positive connection between “equality” and “difference”. The tension between these two concepts is inherent to intercultural approaches, which seek an ideal recognition of singularities, while promoting interactions between them.

6 The Processes of Enculturation and Acculturation

The anthropologist Mead (1972) defined enculturation as a process through which any human group will transmit to its children from birth shared cultural elements, norms and values. It is a process that allows human beings to acquire progressively throughout their childhood and adolescence the values of their original cultural group (Colin & Müller, 1996). It refers to strengthening the original culture’s norms and fundamental values (usually that of the parents). The meaning of the prefix “en-” is to introduce, to encircle, to wrap around, to enclose.

Acculturation means that the norms and values of another culture are acquired progressively. The prefix “ac-” is similar to that of the words *accept*, *accede*, *accommodate*. Acculturation is the outcome resulting from direct and continuous contact among different cultural groups.

For individuals belonging to cultural minorities or having experienced migration, specialists speak of a process of acculturation corresponding to the adjustment that migrants, uprooted from their cultural milieu and transplanted into another society, must undergo (Dinello, 1977). When groups or individuals from different cultures enter into direct and continuous contact, changes occur, with constant recombinations of cultural systems. Acculturation can be observed at both the community and individual levels. It should be noted that in the case of a focus upon the individual, we speak of psychological acculturation.

In societies displaying cultural diversity, we observe the coexistence of the processes of enculturation and acculturation alongside the process of socialization.

Numerous authors have attempted to develop analytical frameworks to study the acculturation process. We will present successively the contributions of Gordon (1964) and Berry (1991). To assist in the understanding of these models, it is necessary to relax the definitions previously stated. As mentioned earlier, concepts can be interpreted in different ways; thus, divergent definitions may be ascribed to them. What remains important are the content and processes enabling them to be described and understood thanks to these two models.

Gordon (1964) employed the concept of assimilation to analyse the acculturation of ethnic minorities in the United States. By establishing three levels of implementation of this concept, he was able to analyse different forms of acculturation in a given society. First, he examined cultural assimilation. This concerns the process of adopting the outstanding features of the dominant group (language, behaviour, values, etc.). In the United States, one observes that numerous ethnic groups are completely absorbed culturally, nevertheless their social participation in society remains modest. Secondly, he develops the idea of a structural assimilation to which he adds two wider meanings: a primary and a secondary. Secondary structural assimilation concerns the relationships said to be secondary (in the workplace, in schools, in political organizations, in the locality, in leisure and in sport), while primary structural assimilation concerns relationships of greater immediacy or intimacy. One could say that it is the type of relationship that most concerns individuals on the personal level (religious communities, social clubs, informal social organizations, close friendships, family relations). Finally, in third place, he places a last type of assimilation, this time connected with individuals' marriages (between those arising from minority and majority groups); this is called matrimonial assimilation. These bear witness, ultimately, to the extent of integration and amalgamation among various groups in a given society. Even if it is relatively old, Gordon's model (1964) allows the dynamic of interethnic relationships in modern societies to be analysed.

The Canadian psychologist Berry (1991) estimated that acculturation could be considered as a phenomenon that is both collective and individual. Acculturation requires individuals, whether they belong to the host society or to various groups being acculturated, to adopt new behaviours and to establish new forms of relationships in their daily lives (Berry, 1991). According to him, the best way to determine the attitude in which individuals being acculturated find themselves in multicultural societies is to ask them questions concerning their daily lives (Berry, 1991):

1. A question focused on the preservation and the promotion of their own cultural identity;
2. A question focused on the importance accorded to other sociocultural groups.

The interconnected answers to these two types of questions allow four types of acculturation strategies to be defined, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Acculturation strategies

		<i>Question 2: Is a value attached to the maintenance of relations with the major/dominant group?</i>	
		Yes	No
<i>Question 1: Is a value attached to the conservation of cultural identity and the characteristics of the group of origin?</i>	Yes	Integration	Separation
	No	Assimilation	Marginalization

Source Berry and Sam (1997)

In order to illustrate this model, we will use the example of Lino,⁶ who we will place in four situations in order to illustrate the four acculturation strategies. It is important to understand that the examples given are employed for illustration purposes and are simplified; reality and the use of concepts from real-life situations are no doubt much more difficult to apprehend.

1. Lino was born in the country that welcomed his parents. They speak to him in their native tongue, which is different to that of the host country. However, they encourage him to watch television and to read in this second language. At home, with his brothers and sisters, Lino uses his parents' language and that of the host country interchangeably. Lino experiences an acculturation process based on an integration strategy (he replies "yes" to the two questions by being involved in maintaining the family's cultural identity and in developing the tools necessary for contact with the host society).
2. Lino was born in the country that welcomed his parents. They want him to adapt as quickly as possible to the host society. For this reason, they do not speak their native tongue at the house and do not celebrate the festivals of their country of origin. To them, Lino's links to the host society are more important than the conservation of his original cultural identity. In this situation, Lino lives an acculturation process based on an assimilation strategy (he replies "no" to the question concerning the maintenance of his original cultural identity and "yes" to the question concerning the value attached to relations with other groups).
3. Lino was born in the country that welcomed his parents. At home, they speak exclusively in their native tongue and have, furthermore, sent Lino to a school that only uses this language. Moreover, they prefer that he associates mainly with friends with the same cultural origin as himself. In this situation, Lino lives an acculturation process based on a separation strategy (he replies "no" to the question concerning the value attached to relations with other groups and he replies "yes" to the question concerning the maintenance of his cultural identity).
4. Lino was born in the country that welcomed his parents. Growing up, he separates himself entirely from the cultural practices of his parents' country of origin; nevertheless, neither does he respect the values or feels he belongs to society in the host country. By separating himself from these two cultural models, Lino finds himself in a situation in which he lives an acculturation process based on a marginalization strategy (he replies "no" to the two questions in the table).

This theoretical presentation of the processes of acculturation is interesting. Nevertheless, it should be treated with care. In fact, if Berry "speaks of 'choice' in the strategies of acculturation adopted" (Amin, 2012, p. 110) by immigrant people or those with migrant backgrounds, it would seem that he does not "take into consideration the social, historical, ideological or cultural conditioning, which often overwhelms

⁶ Our example is based on a fictitious child with a migrant background; nevertheless, Berry's model can be adapted to other situations, such as those of cultural minorities who do not have a migrant origin (the case of the Amerindians, for example). Examples using this model are found again in the remainder of this book and allow the reader to understand the different analytical options proposed.

the individual, as well as the unconscious parameters which impose themselves on him” (Amin, 2012, p. 110). In subsequent studies refining this model, Berry (2005) returns to the idea of choice, which he describes as only possible in the case of an acculturation process based on the integration strategy if—and only if—“the dominant society is open and inclusive with regard to its attitude to cultural diversity” (Berry, 2005, p. 705). In conclusion, this model is therefore interesting in establishing the acculturation strategies possible, but should always be accompanied by a critical approach towards the host society and its attitude towards migrant individuals or those with migrant backgrounds.

7 Conclusion

Intercultural approaches are rooted in different concepts that we have attempted to clarify in this chapter, of which “culture”, “ethnocentrism” and “cultural relativism” are the most important.

Culture gives meaning to people’s and community’s lives. It encourages socialization and grants the possibility for individuals and groups to learn, to communicate, to make exchanges and to borrow practices or innovations. Nevertheless, intercultural approaches are incompatible with any temptation towards essentialism, where culture is defined in a simplistic and unalterable manner.

It is the duty of intercultural approaches to destabilize individuals’ and group’s natural ethnocentrism so as make them ready to accept cultural relativism encouraging an understanding of otherness, without falling into absolute cultural relativism which is harmful for living together since it authorizes the acceptance of all cultural practices without any appraisal of their value.

Other concepts, such as equality, difference, assimilation, integration or recognition are also stimulated by intercultural approaches. However, since these notions are employed in political speeches, by the media and in daily interaction, they are open to numerous interpretations which could lead to confusion.

Migrants and cultural minorities, traditionally the victims of discrimination, experience acculturation processes in different ways according to their origins, their place of residence, public policies concerning them, as well as their daily and migratory experiences. Different theoretical models have attempted to analyse the modalities of acculturation. However, with the public debate on cultural diversity in the school becoming political, it is often expressed in terms of the traditional assimilationist model. While one part of the protagonists in this debate supports this model, teachers and other educational actors are able to resist intercultural innovations that they consider do not conform to it (Inglis, 2009). The meaning of integration in a plural society and at school can be defined according to such value scales as tolerance, acceptance, difference, laicity or human rights (Abdallah-Preteille, 1992). As emphasized by Kymlicka (1995), each time minorities or immigrants have been welcomed as potential citizens, cultural differences have never represented an important obstacle to integration and to living together. The integration, assimilation or

exclusion of migrants depends less on cultural differences than on public policies concerning recognition, insertion and citizenship.

Finally, it seems essential to us to stress the need for educators and teachers who choose intercultural approaches to make use at the same time of the richness, the complexity but also the limits of the key concepts that these approaches are trying to introduce (Barthoux, 2008).

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