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Intercultural discourses and assimilationist practices: some contradictions in the Spanish educational system

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Abstract: This article analyzes the degree of coherence between the legal, theoretical and formal speech about diversity management and the reality of the pedagogical practices in formal educational institutions. To that end a theoretical review of the different educational laws, the speeches of the teaching staff and educational practices from previous researches are addressed. The main result points at the existence of some contradictions: the concept of cultural assimilation at the same time that it is despised, both in educational legislation and in explicit and conscious teaching staff speech, ends up being the one adopted in most of the educational practices. This finding leads to some conclusions regarding the need to rethink and redefine the concept of cultural assimilation from the perspective of equality and a critical conception of ethnicity and identity.
Key words: Management of cultural diversity, educational legislation, educational practice, cultural assimilation, intercultural education.
Resumen: En este artículo se analiza el grado de coherencia entre el discurso legal, teórico y formal acerca de la gestión de la diversidad y la realidad de las prácticas pedagógicas en las instituciones educativas formales. Con este fin se aborda una revisión teórica de las distintas leyes educativas, de los discursos del profesorado y de las prácticas pedagógicas a partir de investigaciones precedentes. El principal resultado apunta a la existencia de algunas contradicciones: el concepto de asimilación cultural al mismo tiempo que se desprecia, tanto en la legislación educativa como en el discurso explícito y consciente del profesorado, acaba siendo el adoptado en la mayoría de las prácticas educativas. Este hallazgo conduce a algunas conclusiones respecto a la necesidad de repensar y redefinir el concepto de asimilación cultural desde la perspectiva de la igualdad y de una concepción crítica de la etnicidad y de la identidad.
Palabras clave: gestión de la diversidad cultural, legislación educativa, prácticas educativas, asimilación cultural, educación intercultural.

Introduction

The presence of a student body with various cultural backgrounds in the classrooms of the Spanish educational centers has led the institutions to, little by little, take political and pedagogical measures to take into account this new reality, resulting from a much more plural society. The lack of suitable referents is evident since Spain's situation as an immigration country –reason why this cultural plurality exists in Spanish schools- is still recent. In only twenty years the composition of the student body has changed significantly. Public policies, as well and more specifically educational and pedagogical ones, have been looking for referents outside the very national borders –in the so-called Anglo-Saxon and French models. On the other hand, this plural reality of the societies is common in all countries from Occidental Europe and has important connection points with the resulting situations from other migration processes in the north of the American continent: in the United States of America and in Canada.

However, in spite of the transnationalization of migrations and the common European policies –which are scarce and not very effective in these cases–, each national educational system, from its own legislative framework, designs its own public policies and a concrete way to manage this cultural diversity. And this is the topic we will discuss next. It comes from the decentralized territorial reality of the Spanish State and we start based on the revision of educational and immigration laws, as well as of previous research, the coherence between the theoretical and formal discourses regarding the management of diversity and the educational practices in the centers.

It is absolutely important to study the consequences of multiculturality over education, enculturation, socialization and communication processes as in the current society every individual faces, from a very early age, a context characterized by the plurality of cultural references. It is fundamental to locate diversity in the very core of the processes of social changes and to understand its consequences on the individual, on the others and in their environment due to the fact that each one of the basic problems, from the sociological point of view, that every culture has to solve, is the way the individual connects with the collective, as Elias (1990) mentioned in *The society of individuals*.

The management of multiculturalism and the concept of citizenship

It is well known that the concept of multiculturalism, as a model for the management of cultural diversity, is understood differently in Europe and in the United States or Canada. In the USA, the emergence of multiculturalism is linked to the fight for the civil rights in the nineteen sixties and the emigration policies of the melting-pot that intend the integration of all the emigrants into one single culture, regardless their condition or origin. In Canada, multiculturalism appears as a judicial concept

present in the 1982 Constitution, accepting the principle of *double membership* and considering that this may favor integration, and, therefore, the equality of opportunities. Nonetheless, it is necessary to bear in mind that in the official discourse the terms *multiculturalism*, *integration* and *interculturalism* overlap, making evident the difficulty that, in practice, is to define a dynamic and complex reality.

In Europe, the term multiculturalism makes reference mainly to minorities, both ethnic and immigrant, that are intended to be integrated in concrete State-nations. Multiculturalism, as a management model of the cultural diversity of Anglo-Saxon inspiration, allows the individual to belong to a recognized society and a different one from the State-Nation (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2001).

It is important to ask how the concept of citizenship is defined from multiculturalism, and it is the Canadian philosopher Kymlicka (1996), who has dealt at length with this matter in his now classic book: *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. As the author mentions, it is necessary to explain how the minority rights in liberal societies are limited by the principles of democracy, social justice and individual freedom, without incompatibility between the recognition of the cultural identity of the minority through determined collective rights and the democratic principles.

Kymlika (1996) asks if we can continue talking about citizenship in a society where rights are distributed in relation to the belonging to a certain group. For the liberals this would be a contradiction since they consider that citizenship, by definition, conceives people as individuals who have the same rights before the law. This would be Rawls (1989) position; that there is no possibility to have a *differentiated citizenship*, as a society where rights depend on the religious or cultural belonging does not recognize the concept of citizenship because this is inseparably linked to the concept of society as a system of fair and beneficial cooperation for all the people recognized as free and equal beings.

For Kymlika (1996), *differentiated citizenship* is defined as the possession of poly-ethnic, representation or specific self-governance rights, in function to a group. This same definition, according to the liberals, is worrisome since it favors and stimulates groups towards introversion and to focus on their difference. However, common citizenship, opposed to *differentiated citizenship*, is not defined only by a common legal status of rights and responsibilities, and this is also admitted by the liberals, but rather by a common identity, an expression of belonging to a political community, as mentioned by Naïr (2010): the strengthening of a common civic and political identity.

The concern of liberals for the acknowledgement of ethnic and cultural rights presents a powerful reason, and this is the stability of the United States, because liberal democracies need mutual solidarity between citizens, and this is the reason why it is important to ask whether political acknowledgment of ethnic and cultural differences is compatible with them. For Kymlika (1996) this concern is somehow exaggerated as he considers that the demands for the collective rights of certain immigrant groups, or groups that feel they are in social disadvantage, have as an objective better and higher social inclusion and participation.

Even if one considers this statement truthful, a fundamental thing to do would be to identify the elements that bring together unity in a democratic and pluralist state because the need of this "feeling" of union or social link is unquestionable. And it is here where this research focuses on one of these elements, considered of the utmost importance to face this challenge: education, as this is the one that makes the construction of this common citizenship possible.

Public policies for the management of cultural diversity in the Spanish educational system

In order to investigate how cultural diversity in the Spanish educational system is dealt with, it is important, in the first place, to analyze the current state of the public policies in terms of cultural diversity, in the context of a decentralized political model, as the case of Spain. We have to bear in mind that we start from the acknowledgement of a diversified and multicultural territorial diversity that is largely managed by the autonomous governments and that allows assessing to what extent the execution of a certain management model of cultural diversity within the decentralized political framework can create a new identity for the educational policies.

Despite the acknowledgement of the plural and decentralized reality of the Spanish State, the hegemonic role of the state is evident in the regulation of fundamental rights and public freedom. Therefore, there is a basic normative from the Central Administration that refers to the educational management of cultural diversity and another autonomic based on its principles.

From the educative point of view, the Spanish State has been concerned with guaranteeing the right to education and a policy for equality of opportunities. This way, it is possible to differentiate three stages in the public policies that refer to the phenomenon of immigration associated to the different educational laws:[1] a first one, marked by the institutionalization of the phenomenon with the establishment

[1] In 2013, the Organic Law to improve educational quality (Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa, LOMCE) was approved and may open a fourth stage. It is the seventh educational law of democracy and the eighth legislation in 43 years, as in 1970, five years before the end of Francoism, the General Law on Education (Ley General de Educación, LGE) was approved.

of certain steps of intervention; a second one that manages the phenomenon of diversity originated by immigration from compensating educational models; and a third one that works from the wide interpretation of equality of right to education (Espejo, 2008).

1st stage. The institutionalization of diversity. It is the stage characterized by the 1990's Organic Law of the Educational System (Ley Orgánica del Sistema Educativo, LOGSE) and by the 1995's Organic Law of Participation, Evaluation and Government of Educational Centers (Ley Orgánica de la Participación, Evaluación y Gobierno de los Centros Educativos). In these laws the treatment of diversity takes place in the context of compensation of inequalities, in the decade of the nineties, when the immigrant population at school ages started to become more visible. This fact makes the State achieve a more concrete normativity that leads to the formulation of a plan to guarantee access for children of immigrants' and permanence in the educational system. In order to do this, programs for the curricular and organizational adaptation and diversification are created.

It can be affirmed that the first stage is defined by the proposal of an educational model that has to do with the cultural diversity that treats diversity with reinforcement and educational compensation programs and that without denying the cultural identity of immigrants, is oriented to the learning of the languages and the culture of the recipient country in order to achieve social interaction and the defense of social and educational equality. Therefore, it is opted for ignoring the students' origin languages and cultures in order not to hinder the cultural adaptation in the host country.

As the educational system ignores any linguistic or cultural reference of the immigrant students, an assimilating model is chosen; it tries to compensate the inequities whose origin lies in deficiencies associated to differences, through specific interventions that may lead to segregation, however all this is justified from the defense of equality. The origin of this model comes from the deficit theories (Bereiter and Engelmans, 1966) as it will be explained later.

2nd Stage. Specific programs for the management of cultural diversity. This stage is marked by the Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación (LOCE –Organic Law of Education Quality) approved in 2002 and which continues with a legislative policy of minimums, guaranteeing the basic educational benefits stated by the 1078 Spanish Constitution. Such Law nullifies the specific section of LOGSE that deals with the Compensation of Inequalities in Education (title V) and substitutes it with actions directed to students with specific educational needs. It focuses on the creation of specific programs to teach the dominant culture and language, offered in specific classrooms, and the segregation of students over 15 years of age, who present problems to adapt to Compulsory Secondary Education (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO) to programs of professional insertion.

3rd Stage. Education integral plans. The 2006 Organic Law on Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación, LOE) is characterized by the concern about equity, quality and convergence of the formative systems. LOE considers that the compensation of educative inequities must be directed to the groups that, due to social, economic, cultural, geographical, ethnic or other reasons are in an unfavorable situation.

Integration policies for the immigrant student population intend to facilitate formal learning, from the standpoint of social relations and also from the curricular one, making the acquisition of the linguistic competences possible in order to promote cohesion with the European formative systems. As a summary, what is intended is to compensate inequalities from an assimilating model, though at the same time the respect to the cultural identity and diversity of pupils with a foreign background is explicitly stated.

The treatment of cultural diversity in the Autonomous Communities

The autonomous educational policies are conditioned by the very decentralizing process and by the autonomous government's ideological orientation (Bonal *et al.*, 2005). According to Jiménez (2007), there are three axes that articulate the territorial differences that are related with both the ideological as well as the economic proposals: the former would be the public-private management model, with a large number of foreign students in the public network, as it is the case of the Valencian Community. The second establishes the relation between quality policies and equality policies, and the third refers to the organization of the teaching of religion in the educational context. It is definitely confirmed that there is an unequal management of diversity according to the Autonomous Communities starting in 2000, when the legislative body on that matter was established. In regards to the Valencian Community, contrary to other Autonomous Communities such as Cataluña and Andalucia, there is not a correlation between the high percentage of foreign students and the consequent institutional measures, which have a scarce regulatory development (Fernández *et al.*, 2010).

Educational measures are conceived, in most of the cases, from the compensatory perspective and refer to, in the first place, to the acquisition and consolidation of linguistic competences of foreign students, and in the second place, to the integrative dimension of the difference from organizational, curricular and tutorial measurements that are located between ethnocentric curricular, relativist cultural or multicultural models with significant phase differences between theory and the practice, between what is said and what is done (Martín, 2003).

However, in most of the cases, there is some continuity between the policies of Autonomous Communities and those from the Central Government. In regards to the attention to the cultural diversity of the student body, the concept of compensation of inequities dominates, this by means of linguistic, organizational and curricular measures. By doing this, the Autonomous Communities offer linguistic support –for the official languages- to foreign students in classrooms that receive different names.

Between assimilation and integration: models to manage cultural diversity in the Spanish educational system

In order to learn the situation of the Spanish state, it is useful to begin from studies carried out in Spain which analyze thoroughly the existing theories and models relating to the management of cultural diversity and their results in different educational policies. Even when educational policies have been roughly drafted, the existing educational models will be summarized here, locating the Spanish educational system close to one of these and revealing the contradictions which were partially envisaged among the legalization, the proclaimed theories and the practices that were carried out.

From an empirical research on how cultural and linguistic diversity is dealt with in the educational centers, Martin (2003) sums up four education management models of cultural diversity locating the Spanish educational system close to one of them. Before presenting the results of this research, it is necessary to describe two theories that emerge from the different way of relating diversity and inequality and of analyzing the causes of the latter. Such theories propose different solutions that refer mainly to the treatment of linguistic differences:

-*Deficit theory*. It begins in the seventies with Bernstein's (1989) research, an education sociologist who explains the scholar failure of those with less opportunities from the linguistic deficits related to cultural deficits and economic shortcomings. Accepting this theory with tints from criticism by linguists such as Labov (1985), it is confirmed that those who fail in the educational system present limited knowledge of linguistic registers or styles, and, therefore, less social mobility. The deficit theory has as an objective the elimination of differences conceived as the causes of inequity through compensatory education directed to those who present the linguistic and/or cultural handicap or deficit, in a word, academic. This means the separation, however temporary, of these students from the group. Such model intends to compensate inequalities, but in order to do so, in most of the cases, it ignores the linguistic and cultural differences. Although these specific interventions are often segregational, the final objective is to facilitate the integration of the students, in this case, those who are migrating to the host country.

Normally, the application of this deficit theory in the school is carried out individually and not associated to the ethnic or cultural belonging, albeit at times, there exists a risk of generalizing the deficit of a specific social class or cultural or national group.

-*Theory of the difference;* it has the intention of providing an alternative response to the deficit theory from the linguistics point of view, considering that it is not so much of a deficit, rather a linguistic difference that is only valued socially as a positive or negative. This theory intends to maintain linguistic and cultural differences as a way to fight against inequity and educational failure.

Similarly, it intends to foster inter-group relations and the creation of common spaces. It has given way to multicultural and intercultural models that, from a linguistic point of view, have the intention of ensuring the learning of the main language spoken in the country and at school, without ignoring or making any type of negative discrimination of the vernacular or mother tongue, using it as the base for the learning of a second language.

The objective, therefore, from the linguistic point of view is bilingualism. From this theory it is understood that identity construction processes necessarily go through the recognition of the two languages, at least the mother tongue and the academic or vehicular one, and through the creation of multicultural spaces in the centers where the use –because it is allowed- of other languages, and there is the necessary sensibility and formation so that the faculty does not perceive this as a sign of isolation or no integration into the recipient society.

The theory of difference does not seem to have clear practical acceptance in the Spanish educational system because of the difficulties attached to the proposal of a better and more advanced preparation of teachers, the need of teachers' aides in the classrooms or the modification of the curriculum and the centers' organization. This social formation that assumes the adopting of power distribution measures or empowerment of the linguistic and cultural minorities. This social transformation that implies the adaptation of power distribution or empowerment of the linguistic or cultural minorities has not occurred in practice in the Spanish society.

This way, there is an account for the existing educational models from the combination of the responses given to these two questions: in the first place, to what extent does school facilitate keeping the identity and the minority cultural and linguistic characteristics, and secondly, whether inter-group relations are promoted (Martín Rojo, 2003).

According to what is in Table 1[1] the double negative response to the previous questions leads to a compensatory educational model, while the double positive response leads to an inter-cultural educational model. The various positive and negative combination foster, on one hand, an assimilating educational model if it promotes inter-group relations but does not preserve cultural identity, and on the other, a multi-cultural educational model if it emphasizes the preservation of cultural and linguistic characteristics and does not promote inter-group relations.

The assimilating educational model

This is the model that opts for the discourse on equality sacrificing the difference, since it is seen as a menace or an obstacle for the individuals' integration and social cohesion. The dominant common language allows the integration of all social sectors –minorities or low social classes. From this proposal the recognition of the difference is considered to be caused by stigmatization, segregation and social rejection, and therefore, it is convenient to homogenize parting from the majority language and culture in order to arrive to equality of rights.

From the linguistic viewpoint, this means the substitution of the mother tongue for the dominant language to guarantee equality of opportunities. This is the French model where all differential treatment caused by the origin cultural diversity is considered discriminatory. The message to the children of immigrants is that they have to be similar to the natives to be accepted.

From this assimilationist proposal, it is understood that minority discrimination and marginalization problems are eliminated. The cornerstone is the concept of integration (Aja *et al.*, 1999), and this is not possible if a redistribution of power and a betterment in the classes' position of the immigrants do not take place. The acculturation or assimilation process, if not accompanied by the individual's real insertion and participation in society leads to a personal disorientation of referents and values with grave consequences in the construction of the subject's personality and their social adaptation and participation (Carbonell, 1999).

The labeling of the immigrants' children as second generation or immigrant students can be a proof of how, despite the current assimilationist model, European societies still perceive them as alien; and also how part of this generation does not feel part of the country despite having the Spanish nationality.[3]

[2] This table can be seen at the end of this article.

[3] The result of a survey to 934 students from four Secondary Education Institutes with a high percentage of immigrant origin students (42% of the students who were surveyed are foreigners), in the Research Project (I+D+i, GR 12-20: 2013-2015), which is being carried out: "Género, Educación e Igualdad (GEI)" (Gender, Education and Equality) so confirms it; 58% of foreign-origin students are identified with their parents origin culture (unpublished research).

On the other hand, it is necessary to distinguish between assimilationist models that insist on the abandonment and rejection of the mother language and culture, and those which does not. Although it is true that the trend, in the case of the Spanish educational system, is the loss of the origin language (Broeder and Mijares, 2003), along with, sometimes certain shame and rejection towards the family's culture.

The compensatory educational model

This model combines the assimilation of the segregation, creating groups at the schools that receive a specific attention to deal with concrete deficits, so that they reach the same level as the normal group. From this model, diversity is perceived as a source of social inequality, and this is fought by making the differences invisible through learning the culture and languages of the official majority.

This situation has as a consequence the underrating of the foreign students' cultures and languages, as well as their marginalization. To the extent that the objectives associated to the overcoming of the deficit, mainly linguistic, are not reached, segregation can become definitive and produce marginalization, exclusion and educational failure. This model is not commonly made explicit in the schools, since it is in the opposite direction of what the current laws and norms state has to be done regarding diversity.

However, certain educational practices, in spite of belonging to a minority, come close to this model even though they do not state this explicitly. So declares a young university student, daughter to Moroccan parents (Jiménez-Delgado, 2012: 338):

> I don't know how to read Arabic because I haven't been able to study it and of course I'm angry and I resent my parents as well, I ask them: why didn't you teach me? You ask me to speak my language, why didn't you teach me!" It should be taught at school, at least as an extracurricular subject of course.

The multi-cultural educational model

This model is linked to the difference theory as it does not look for cultural assimilation but rather it facilitates the preservation of identity and its differential linguistic and cultural features. Within this multicultural model we can find the origin culture and language teaching programs that lately have been extended, in countries where these programs exist, to students of other origin languages in order to avoid ghettoization and as a tool to reach multi-culturalism.

It is Canada's model where the Teaching of Origin Culture and Language, has helped normalize perception of multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism in society, at the same time that it has contributed to improve the foreign students' boding with

the school and Canadian society. It is interesting to highlight that in the Canadian society there has been both a rejection of these programs and an acceptance, even from a third generation; a phenomenon known as ethnic revival.

In such situation there are two aspects worth mentioning. On the one side, in this generation, there is a linguistic, sociocultural and economic integration in the Canadian culture, therefore, the learning of the origin language and culture is not a previous condition for this integration, considerably changing its sense. On the other hand, there has been an important change in the denomination of those linguistic learning programs, substituting the origin language for foreign language, a much more prestigious and open term that does not appeal to the cultural origin of the individuals.

In the case of Spain, despite the international and European legislations, and in spite of certain agreements, such as the one signed with Morocco for the teaching of the language to the children of Moroccan immigrants, is not a generalized reality. When there is teaching, an out-of-school-day schedule is organized, mainly through agreements with certain non-government organizations (NGOs) or associations.

Religious teaching is not carried out either despite the existence of the Religious Freedom Organic Law (ley Orgánica de Libertad Religiosa) of 1980, and concrete agreements with certain religious associations (Aja *et al.*, 1999; MEC, 2014). Some paternalistic and folkloric attitudes are perceived that undermine the multi-cultural reality (Carbonell, 1999) and something that is even worse, they compulsorily set the identity of the other demanding compliance with the assigned stereotype. On the other hand, the multi-cultural model links the construction of identity only to familial origins, as if these were the only and best source for the construction of the self.

The intercultural educational model

Although it is also linked to the difference theory, similarly to the multicultural model, the significant contrast is on the fact that the inter-cultural model intends to act over the entire community, not only over the children of immigrants.

This means reorganizing the centers and syllabuses by integrating knowledge from all the cultural diversity present in the classrooms and in the educational center. This models' main objective is the search of a shared identity (Naïr, 2010) for a plural coexistence, through mutual knowledge and critical questioning of the proper and the different, which implies the exercise of an ethnocentric criticism and the acceptance of the other as an interlocutor, with the same rights and obligations. It is the recognition of the citizenship for everyone. And this means that the majoritarian society shall be willing to distribute power, which implies a complete democratic knowledge process.

Therefore, in this model, the teaching of cultures and languages cannot be limited to the minority cultural groups, but rather it should be offered to all the society as a means of acquiring inter-cultural communicative competences. In Spain, curricular practices truly intercultural in nature are lacking, as it is mentioned by a number of authors (Liégois, 1998; Torres, 1992; Peñalva, 2003; Álvaro, 2012).

Toward a necessary reinterpretation of the cultural assimilation

After the exposition of the most relevant educational models, and acknowledging that none of these can be materialized in a pure manner, neither in the educational policies nor in its practices, we shall return to the issue previously mentioned regarding which of the models or group of models can be recognized in the Spanish educational policies and pedagogical practices.

In order to do so, we must begin from the concept of cultural assimilation (Terrén, 2005), in order to explain why this is a model that despite being despised ends up being accepted by most of the educational practices (Martín, 2003), especially those addressed to the multicultural educational population.

As it is becoming clear now, cultural assimilation is a central point when researching on the socialization and social integration processes of children of immigrants. In Spain, from the sociology of education, in the 1990's the topic began to be studied, confirming a clear tendency to revile cultural assimilation as a wrong way of integration since it implies a renunciation of a supposed identity and cultural difference. Before this failed integration, inter-culturality is defended as a good form of social participation.

It is true, on the one hand, that sociological research on immigrant's descendants is relatively recent, as well as on political and educational management of this great social plurality; in the last years however, this has presented an important increase in Spain (Terrén, 2005). This lack of tradition and empiric research has fostered the importation of models to explain the new processes of incorporation of immigrants and their descendants into the Spanish society, and one of these imported models is the one of assimilation.

It is basically from the American research tradition where the concept of assimilation is taken, without spending time to verify its practical validity as its recent presence in the "second generations" in our country. Thereby, before being studied in the new context, this management model of diversity is reviled, sticking –without questioning- to the inter-cultural and or multi-cultural models.

Cultural assimilation is therefore perceived as a poorly accomplished social integration, since it implies renouncing the supposed cultural difference, with the consequences of losing one's self-esteem and dignity. On the other side, the scope

would be the good intercultural integration. So it is proven by some studies that define as not so positive in results, those in which most of the faculty ends up defending, in practice, the assimilationist paradigm, instead of the intercultural one (Matencio-López *et al.*, 2015: 187).

There are historical reasons –fundamentally a homogenizing past tinted by the Francoist dictatorship- that tend to distrust those policies that do not make an emphasis on respect for diversity, and that do not reclaim the cultural and linguistic plurality of each one of the Autonomous Communities which the Spanish State is based upon. Facing the order based on cultural homogeneity, which at one time was perceived as the result of a repressive political power, and which critical sociology pointed as the cause for social and educational inequalities, an exaltation of cultural differences arise as a libertarian process, and consequently, cultural assimilation, understood as a similar development (Brumbaker, 2001) of the native population, is reviled by critical sociologists and by progressive political sectors.

An impulsive vindication of the diverse has been produced, which understands diversity as a richness in itself, as if it was a static and physical cultural asset which is in need of special protection so that it is not corrupted or debased (Terrén, 2005). This explains some contradictory discourses and practices of exaltation of the difference.

In Spain, from the most sociological pedagogy, which proposed a critical theory of the curriculum, assimilationist and integrationist or compensatory educational policies were reviled, and the American melting-pot model was criticized as it was considered a model of cultural imperialism. According to Terrén (2005), in this context, the concept cultural assimilation is interpreted as a cultural reproduction, whereas the school, as an ideological apparatus of the capitalist state, from the Althusserian approach, only produces cultural integration by ignoring or suppressing all the differences or particularities that question the dominant ideology.

From this reproductionist interpretation, more ideological than scientific, appears the idolatry of diversity (Savater, 2004), and this slogan is ceaselessly repeated in Spanish schools as if it was a mantra: "diversity enriches", however in practice, the teaching activity contradicts it as it turns out to be assimilationist in most of the cases, despite it appears to be multi-cultural as a professor of a secondary-level institute states (Jiménez-Delgado, 2012: 360):

> Thing is that sometimes we don't go further the folkloric acts and this is embarrassing me. Well, I mean, I'm not Flemish nor do I want to be associated to Flemish... besides, stereotyping doesn't help either... the most intercultural thing we did was the Constitution thing, but not from folklore. It is not what all the center wants, the teachers, is more just few people's desire.

In line with what Savater mentioned before, the majority educational discourse is excessively monotonous with the concept of diversity putting it before the concept of assimilation since the latter is considered standardizing. However, it is of the utmost importance to ask why the decision of maintaining the cultural identity is so respectable and must be promoted at school, whereas the option of assimilate oneself, in the sense of sharing certain values of the majority society is not so promoted and it is even interpreted as a failure in the integration process.

It is, then, necessary to reinterpret the concept of cultural assimilation. To this end, the simple and essentialist vision of the cultural dynamic that come from a static and closed conception of the identity and ethnicity must be reconsidered. Because the current ethnicity theory (Terrén 2005) recognizes the changing and fluid character of the identities in the globalization context which propitiates a number of exchanges with the result of new identity constructions which are much more flexible, fluid and dynamic (Thomas, 2004; Bauman, 2006).

Separately, this simple and closed conception of cultural identity is associated to an also very limited and static conception of socialization processes. The reproductionist scheme of anti-assimilationism defines socialization from a more intergenerational rather than intra-generational perspective, hence it ignores the powerful and multiple socializing influences in a globalized world, at the same time that it underrates the active role of the individual in these processes.

What is more, from reproductionism cultural assimilation processes are analyzed from a perspective of a selective dichotomy as the one that is established between the hosting culture and the visiting one. This is, therefore, an excessively simplistic binary model of cultural identity. Such thesis, however, is overcome by the reflexive sociologic perspective represented by the contemporary sociologists such as Beck (1997), Giddens (1997), Castells (2003) and Touraine (2002), especially the latter when the individual is thought as a social actor and subject at the same time.

Park and Burgess (1970), in the second half of the XX century, already defined assimilation as a dissolution process of external signs that produce superficial homogeneity –in the fashion, in the manners- perfectly compatible with criterion and attitude differences. As Terrén (2001: 100), mentions when explaining Park's assimilation concept, "modern contexts tend toward cosmopolitism and require homogeneity to foster individual mobility and contacts, and should they lack it, these would be faced a hindrance by the conservatism taboos and prejudices".

This secondary or superficial homogeneity, for Park (1970), is a condition for applying the laissez-faire, laissez-aller principle because this establishes an elementary solidarity that allows individuals of different minds to coordinate their actions and provide the group with a corporative character.

After all, for Park (1970) the capability of independent movement was the base and symbol of all forms of independence.

Assimilation fosters two types of different social solidarity and connections that differentiate premodern from modern societies. The former are based on primary connections and the latter on secondary connections.

This means that the bases of social life and interdependence change in modern "civic societies", where differently from pre-modern societies, what matters and is relevant is citizenship and not family relations. It must be highlighted that this conception of assimilation, located in a socio-historic moment different to the current one, already has the seed of citizenship over cultural and familiar presence.

Located at a different time and geographic context from that of Park (1970), transnationalism has to be added to the concept of citizenship (Portes, 2004), as a back-and-forth process that allows, in a globalized world as ours is now, continuous extraterritorial transfer, which enables the children of immigrants to have a double or even a multiple presence in different cultures and societies, namely: the host and immigrant ones.

For this reason, despite immigration is a familiar issue, as Siguán (1998) has mentioned, the weight of peers and the global and plural world during adolescence and young adulthood is heavier than that in their parents, hence, weakening inherited identities.

The different types of assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2010) will give way to different forms of adaptation, participation or integration of the children of immigrants into the recipient society.

Some conclusions and proposals

After analyzing the current cultural diversity management models, from their historic dimension and theoretical, political and also ideological formulations, from their practical social reality, the most important conclusion is that it is necessary to start from new socialization models, which are more flexible, plural and horizontal, as well as from critical conceptions of ethnicity and identity, since an identity withdrawal in the frame of a culturalization process of the world that leads to an unmeasured value of cultural or civilizational categories at the moment of defining belonging of individuals and communities is often assumed uncritically and paradoxically" (Rodríguez, 2011: 92).

From this new perspective that assumes the challenge of redefining the concepts of socialization and identity from new parameters, cultural assimilation is defined as a complex concept, in contact with multiple variables. Many of these variables are unconnected to characteristics associated to familiar origin or nationality of the

children or their parents, because all the variables that have an influence in the social incorporation process cannot be isolated or controlled. Therefore, the weight of a factor depends on the configuration of the sociohistorical relations into which the individual is inserted. The influence of gender, level of education or social stratum is related to the secondary characteristics (Martín Criado, 2010).

It is fundamental, in the necessary debate on cultural diversity management that is still due in Spain, to introduce analysis elements such as equality, more often than not ignored by the prominence of the right to the difference. This theory of the difference, excessively defended and justified by the multicultural model, is also occupying a central place, leaving behind much more important debates; those that must decide over the equality of men and women, locals and foreigners, and mostly on the individual freedom and the intents of imposing communitarianism.

In order to do so, educational centers must use –in both their organizational and managerial forms and also in the curriculum- the tools for democracy: dialogue, vindication and protection, enjoyment and observance of the same rights for everybody, this is, the same kind of access to citizenship. And since in the conception of democracy (Sartori, 2003) is the expansion of its own limits, this is to say, its improvement, it is just and necessary not to reluctantly accept its current limits.

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Annex

Table 1

Educational Theories and Models

Are inter-group relations fostered?	Is the minority cultural and linguistic identity maintenance fostered?	
	Yes	No
Yes	*Integration*	*Assimilation*
	Theory of the difference	Theory of deficit
	Intercultural Educational Model	*Assimilative educational model (laissez faire)*
No	*Segregation*	*Marginalization*
	Theory of the difference	Theory of deficit
	Multicultural educational model	*Compensatory educational model*

Source: Martín (2003).

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