

Introduction

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This volume aims to present the research work carried out within the FP7 research project TOLERACE: *The semantics of tolerance and (anti-)racism in comparative perspective*, specifically in the sphere of education. This component of the research work aimed to explore official policies and initiatives designed to promote tolerance and anti-racism – generally focusing on compulsory education - as well as the ways in which schools, local authorities and mediation agencies (such as NGOs and other civil society associations) are responding to contemporary debates on cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. The work also aimed to unravel how public bodies (such as state-endorsed institutions, regional/local authorities and schools) cope with situations and denunciations of racial/ethnic/religious discrimination and the initiatives they take to foster anti-racist values and attitudes. While the TOLERACE project does not aim primarily to examine the denunciation of racial discrimination, the selection of cases marked by racism was crucial to examining processes and situations involving political, socio-economic and cultural exclusion and marginalisation, as well as to deepening our understanding of the production of its denial and misrecognition.

The contextualised and historically-informed approach developed by TOLERACE allowed for the examination of crucial debates considering racism as a historical process related to routine governmentalities (Hesse, 2004), i.e. to the ways in which power is distributed and populations are administered, and for interrogating the effectiveness of official and state-endorsed initiatives in terms of how they were conceived (that is, unravelling the *perceived* situation of vulnerability and the nature of the measures proposed to tackle it), rather than merely at the level of implementation. This helped to us to move away from an approach focusing on cultural difference to one focusing on institutionalised racism and its constant renewal in contemporary political (and academic) discourses and practices for so-called integration, social cohesion and the education of the *prejudiced individual*.

TOLERACE's approach to education followed three key tenets:

1) Considering the long-term political objectives of state mass schooling

In the last two centuries, modern schooling has constituted a crucial instrument in the construction of nation states, frequently eliminating the range of student subjectivities by enforcing Eurocentric knowledge constructions. In spite of attempts to challenge this homogenising model in recent decades, most have failed by consecrating the state as the core agent from which change must emerge (Brandt, 1986; Hesse, 1997; Popkewitz, 2000). This is not to say that specific attempts to challenge educational structures and contents have not emerged; on the contrary, education has been a crucial sphere in which struggles for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity have taken place (McCarthy, 1993). Yet, as the cases examined in this volume attest, change in terms of anti-racism has mostly been cosmetic.

2) Avoiding the trap of debating racism as a matter of culture

Significantly, the swing towards *cultural politics* has deflected attention away from questions of power/knowledge (Troyna, 1993; Popkewitz, 2000), whilst framing racism and inequalities as related to the cultural incompatibilities of ethnically-marked subjects (Sayyid, 2004) to conform to the demands of education systems. Thus it may be said that the past fifty years have witnessed a variation between the assimilation/integration and inter/multicultural models, all of which have failed to substantially challenge the privileging of unmarked identities - in spite of apparently doing so via the (re)presentation/celebration of diversity – as well as failing to promote meaningful discussion on racism and anti-racism.

3) Using the local as a site to make the interplay of different levels of policy influence evident

In spite of much work on the globalization of education throughout the 2000s (e.g. Burbules & Torres, 2000; Dirlik, 2006), **the national** has been the preferred site for analysis of education policy. As Thomas Popkewitz has argued, we should instead:

consider the construction of educational reform as a problematic that moves from examining the nation or state as a legal/administrative entity that produces action, or as a supastate entity such as the European Union, to understanding the discourses that circulate in reform efforts as a complex web of simultaneously global and local governing practices (2000: 172).

In this volume, we therefore focus on local cases to make the interplay of different levels of political influence – European and national – and the way in which they are being negotiated by mediation agents at local level evident. The cases reveal the

influence of, and resistance to, European guidelines on racism and anti-racism. This is particularly relevant in the contextualised study of racism, given the European typology of 'regionally registered racisms' that presumes its *evaporation* (Goldberg, 2006; 2009). Additionally, the focus on the local was chosen to avoid the construction of minoritised people as mere *reactors* to state policy and innovation (Brandt, 1986: 5), as well as to account for the blurring of the state and civil society.

The case studies reported in this volume enabled a variety of debates and initiatives to be mapped out regarding difference and 'integration' that have been taking place in education, and that have featured both in political and academic debates: discriminatory school structures and processes (Denmark, Spain – the Basque Country and the United Kingdom), school segregation (Portugal and Italy), Eurocentrism in curricula and textbooks (France and Portugal), and intercultural education (Spain - Andalusia). One of the cases (Germany) also deals with the transition to working life for highly-educated Muslim men. The variety of cases analysed were chosen for their quality as 'paradigmatic cases' (Flyvbjerg, 2004), i.e. they are cases that highlight more general characteristics of the societies studied and the sociological/social problem in question, rather than for the purposes of generalisation. The research work consisted of an analysis of relevant policy developments (both national and European), as well as the study of local/regional responses and frameworks for racism, through in-depth interviews with relevant mediating agents (teachers, cultural mediators, social workers) and gatekeepers (decision-makers at local, regional and national level). Together with the empirical study of cases related to racism and Islamophobia, examination of public debates and initiatives was used to understand the locus of anti-racist measures in education, helping to make the semantics of tolerance, integration and (anti-)racism evident as they are deployed in policy and in everyday discourses and practices. A description of the cases and their rationale now follows.

In **Portugal**, the case selected concerned several instances of school segregation involving a Roma/Gypsy 'community' in the rural north. The segregated school was eventually closed, not due to the segregation – as it was never really defined as such by the mediation agents involved in the case – but due to a wider national policy of closing down small primary schools. The case was approached via the discourse and intervention practices that foreclosed the framing of the situation as a case of racism and instead promoted its understanding as related to the cultural and educational *deficits* of the Roma/Gypsy people. With anti-racist measures off the education policy agenda, the solutions proposed for the pupils concerned were analysed in relation to dominant notions of social control and of schooling as a civilising tool for the Roma/Gypsy pupils and their families.

In **Denmark**, the work explored policy developments focusing on the teaching of Danish as a second language – only children from the EU/EØS countries are entitled to free mother-tongue teaching despite existing legislation on ethnic equality. Several initiatives within the *Actionplan 2010* aimed at combating discrimination and racism in schools were also examined. The case revealed the ways in which the non-recognition of non-EU languages reflects the general trend that understands integration as assimilation. In particular, it showed that the focus on cultural and linguistic sameness and integration is becoming a question of immigrant cultural capacity to ‘harmonise’ their values with Danish values. In this context, anti-racist measures are seen as relating to the concepts of social egalitarianism and universalism assumed as constitutive elements of Danish society.

In **France**, questions about the teaching of tolerance and anti-racism are evident in debates on the history and memory of colonialism. Accordingly, the case chosen relates to discussions and specific initiatives for the teaching of slavery in the French education system – both in the curricula and textbooks – considering the political struggles associated with this since the 1990s. The study explored the ways in which questions concerning the teaching of tolerance and anti-racism have become evident in debates on the history and memory of colonialism. More specifically, it examined the tension between discourses often related to the construction of a *dignified* black identity and those that make the construction of a white metropolitan national identity problematic.

In **Germany**, the work explored the transition from education to employment of highly educated Muslim men. Specifically, the analysis focused on discrimination against Muslims who not only practice their religion privately but are also actively involved in ‘legalist’ Islamist organisations on a voluntary basis. It concluded that affiliation to certain Muslim organisations constitutes a barrier to entering the labour market for qualified jobs and might be favouring brain drain.

In **Italy**, empirical work centred on the schooling of Roma/Gypsy pupils in the light of their social and spatial segregation, particularly evident in the political debate that took place during the last decade. The semantics associated with the idea of ‘schooling the little nomads’ encapsulates and reifies the processes of constructing ‘otherness’ and defining the perceived situation of vulnerability through a set of ‘cultural inadequacies’, which are acting as a deterrent to the discussion of racism and anti-racism.

In **Spain**, and more precisely in the **Basque Country**, the case analysed refers to the management of difference through the linguistic models available in private and state schools. The structures in place provide three different models of education:

model A, in Spanish; model B, mixed; model C, in *Euskara* (the Basque language). The case study addressed how the definition of a Basque identity is shaping discourses and practices involving so-called immigrants and minorities, reinforcing the construction of 'otherness'. Within the regional context of the construction of *Basqueness*, it proposes that language models are institutionalising racism by virtue of concentrating immigrant and Roma/Gypsy pupils in schools where Castilian is the main language of instruction, leading to the *ghettoisation* of minoritised children.

Also in **Spain**, but in the context of **Andalusia**, the work focused on an analysis of *Intercultural Education* discourses and practices in multicultural contexts. The research explored the current disconnection between political planning and teaching practices involving intercultural education (thus becoming a goal located outside the curricular contents). The case showed that measures for interculturality are themselves contributing towards the construction of 'foreign' children as a set of *deficits* (e.g. linguistic) to be *rectified and compensated* by the intervention of teachers. Accordingly, the role attributed to mediation agents refers to the 'normalization'/integration of difference. Within this context of a strong assimilationist *ethos*, racism is seen as being located – and tackled - outside the school gates.

In the **United Kingdom**, the research work focused on the analysis of debates and discourses involving difference and integration and the identification of discriminatory school structures for Muslim pupils. The study focused on three related questions: a) initiatives for the prevention and monitoring of 'extremism' in schools (which currently targets Muslim children, beginning at the age of 5); b) debates on Muslim faith schools; c) the pathologisation of Muslim families, culture and religion. The research work aimed to explore the renewal of Islamophobia in a supposedly 'post-racial' context, following the declared 'failure of multiculturalism' by political leaders and its crucial implications for the life sphere of education.

These eight case studies allowed us to identify common issues in the contexts examined, which are highlighted below.

- **Racism was not considered a problem to be tackled by schools.** Focusing on questions of culture, rather than power relations, most mediation agents saw their role as promoting the celebration of cultural diversity. This contributed towards the misrecognition of racism, which was seen both in cases of indirect racial discrimination (e.g. in the Basque country, where the linguistic model of learning - in Spanish and/or Basque – was leading to the ghettoisation of immigrant and minority children in Spanish only schools), as well as in cases in which it was explicit (e.g. the

segregation of Roma/'Gypsy' pupils along 'ethnic' lines in Portugal and in Italy);

- The **framing of the problem** that the initiatives examined were meant to tackle **was reproducing the very same racist assumptions that they were meant to challenge**. The semantics of anti-racism and tolerance in education revealed the pathologisation of the populations targeted for intervention (e.g. the Roma, Muslims) and the invisibilisation of the privilege of the ethnically unmarked;
- The absence of a clear meaning for notions that circulate widely (e.g. **intercultural or multicultural education**) meant that they become, in practice, normalizing categories emphasizing the need for peaceful 'coexistence', focusing on 'the positive side' of 'other' cultures, and **re-signifying anti-racism as a depoliticised practice that operates by 'doing good by doing little'** (Kirp, 1979).

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