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FROM MULTICULTURAL RISK TO INTERCULTURAL RESOURCE: THE EDUCATOR'S COMPETENCIES FOR MANAGING ETHNOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

Abstract: This article examines the crucial role of the educator in transforming ethnocultural diversity from a potential source of conflict (risk) into a valuable driver for development and social cohesion (resource) across all educational levels, from kindergarten to higher education. The paper first establishes a conceptual framework distinguishing between static multiculturalism and dynamic interculturalism. It then defines the educator's essential managerial competencies, which encompass cognitive knowledge, affective attitudes (*savoir-être*), and behavioral skills necessary for promoting dialogue and social justice. We argue that effective management relies on applying innovative, sociocultural-constructivist technologies (e.g., Cooperative Learning) to foster constructive interdependence and expand learners' cognitive schemas. Finally, the study proposes the Action Research Cycle as a robust methodological model for the empirical validation and continuous refinement of the educator's competencies, ensuring the sustainability and flexibility of the diversity management model in practice.

Key words: Ethnocultural Diversity, Intercultural Competence, Pedagogical Management, Action Research, Social Cohesion, Constructivism.

Language: English

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Introduction

The Universal Pedagogical Imperative

Contemporary society is characterized by ethnocultural diversity, a reality pervasive across every educational institution, from kindergarten to higher education. This diversity is multicultural in essence (describing the static state of heterogeneity) but must be strategically transformed into an intercultural wealth (emphasizing dynamic, active interaction and dialogue). This transformation is crucial for mitigating multicultural vulnerability (misunderstanding, aggression, prejudice) and fostering creativity, tolerance, and enrichment. The

central figure in this process is the educator (teacher, mentor, lecturer), whose specific competencies and managerial strategies are decisive for successful integration and social cohesion within the educational environment.

The entire concept of transforming the educational environment is summarized in the diagram below, illustrating the educator's competencies as the active bridge between vulnerability and wealth.

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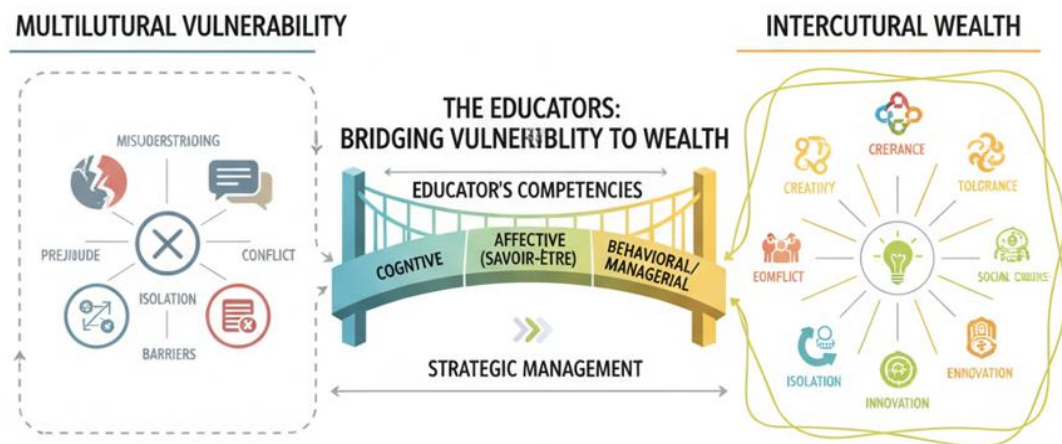


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Educator's Role in Transforming Ethnocultural Diversity

THE EDUCATOR'S SPECIFIC ROLE: VERTICAL MANAGEMENT OF DIFFERENCE BILINGUALISM AS A NEUROCOGNITIVE ADVANTAGE

The Educator as Diagnostician and Risk Preventer

To effectively execute this vertical managerial role, the educator must first diagnose potential ethnocultural hazards and establish the strategic framework for their mitigation and prevention, commencing from the initial stages of the pedagogical process..

- **Attitudes (Savoir-Être):** The educator must demonstrate openness, curiosity, and a willingness to suspend their own involuntary judgment, which fosters a positive climate and serves as the foundation for intercultural competence (Byram 2021: 75).
- **Preventive Role:** The educator is responsible not only for mitigating tension but also for fulfilling the ethical imperative to cultivate social justice and equality of opportunity, regardless of ethnocultural background. They establish universal human values (mutual aid, friendship, attention to others) early in the educational process.

The Educator as Resource Facilitator and Architect of Collaboration

In the upper stages (secondary, high school, and higher education), the focus shifts towards the conscious management of interaction through innovative and transformative approaches.

- **Transformative Leadership:** The educator must embrace and implement innovations transformations—profound changes in the pedagogical process necessary to meet the challenges of the global era (Fullan 2003: 18).
- **Regulation of Differences:** The educator guides attention toward rapprochement based on common goals, achieving interaction through the comparison of cultures rather than their opposition.
- **Leading Role:** As a facilitator, they structure the learning process so that students/learners move from a passive to an active, responsible, and creative role, utilizing team diversity as a creative resource.

THE EDUCATOR'S COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

To fulfill this universal managerial role, the educator requires intercultural competencies that are mandatory across all educational levels. Darla K. Deardorff defines a comprehensive model requiring the educator to possess (Deardorff 2009: 33):

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Table 1

Competency Component	Managerial Requirements and Skills (Universal Focus)
Cognitive (Knowledge and Comprehension)	Systematic knowledge of cultural differentiation, ethnopsychology, and ethnopedagogy. Critical awareness of one's own cultural identity as a basis for objectively perceiving the "Other."
Affective (Attitudes)	Openness, respect, and curiosity. Motivation for a positive attitude toward different cultures and achieving high levels of tolerance and cultural relativism.
Behavioral (Skills)	Managerial skills for creating a positive environment. Capacity for effective communication and conflict resolution on an ethnocultural basis. Flexibility in method application.

A key element: The educator must master the technology of pedagogical communication, maintaining a partnering and dialogical style (Freire 1970: 67) that encourages polylogue and intersubjective relations.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR MODELING COHESION ACROSS ALL LEVELS

Sociocultural-Constructivist Technologies and Collaboration

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory offers a universal approach that views learning as a social process where knowledge is constructed through interaction (Vygotsky 1978: 57). The intercultural dialogue inherent in this process stimulates cognitive dissonance, which is essential for expanding the learners' cognitive schemas and developing complex forms of thinking.

- **Group Organization Strategy:** The educator implements Cooperative Learning, using structures developed by authors such as Spencer Kagan (Kagan 2001: 98). These structures ensure constructive interdependence, where the group's success relies on the unique contribution of each member.
- **Group Dynamics:** To ensure social cohesion, the educator must actively manage Group Dynamics, understanding that change occurs through intervention in field forces and collective decision-making (Lewin 1951: 229).

Values Formation and Language Competence

Diversity management also involves a systematic approach to language and values.

- **Language Competence and Intercultural Learning:** The educator must be aware of the principles of linguistic interdependence (Cummins 2000: 145), supporting the development of the mother tongue, as it provides a cognitive basis for mastering the official language of the state, which serves a "unifying" function and is crucial for socialization.
- **Social and Moral Development:** Through the application of methods for social and moral education, the educator fosters empathy and prosocial behavior (help, cooperation)—essential elements of moral development (Hoffman 2000: 17).

ASSESSING MANAGERIAL SUCCESS:

The pedagogical management of ethnocultural diversity is a successful process when risk is permanently transformed into a resource. This is measured by:

1. **Quality of Pedagogical Work:** Attainment of educational standards through the application of innovative technologies (Fullan 2003: 18).
2. **Social Cohesion:** The level of intercultural communicative competence (Deardorff 2009: 33) and tolerance demonstrated by learners in all their interactions.

The educator, with their managerial competencies, is the sole architect capable of building this holistic, integrated, and tolerant educational environment necessary for the successful realization of every individual in the global world.

METHODOLOGICAL MODEL FOR APPROBATION: VALIDATING

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MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES IN PRACTICE

After defining the educator's competencies and innovative strategies for transforming ethnocultural risk into a resource (Sections 3 and 4), the need arises for a systematic approach to their empirical validation and practical refinement. The theoretical model of diversity management, based on dialogicality and constructivism, cannot be static. It must undergo continuous revision in a real educational environment, covering the entire vertical spectrum of pedagogical interaction.

For this purpose, we propose the application of the Action Research Cycle, which is highly suitable for managerial and social interventions (Lewin 1951: 229). This cyclical model allows the educator to become not only a manager but also a researcher of their own practice, providing a mechanism for the sustainable improvement of intercultural communicative competence.

The process is structured into three interconnected phases:

Phase I: Planning and Operationalization (Plan)

This phase directly links theoretical postulates with practical metrics.

- **Operationalization of Goals:** The main hypothesis of the approbation is that the purposeful application of the defined educator's intercultural competencies leads to an increase in social cohesion and a reduction in registered conflicts across the experimental groups (kindergarten, school, higher education).
- **Indicator Definition:** Metrics are selected to reflect the transformation from risk to resource. Standardized instruments (e.g., tests for intercultural sensitivity) are used to assess the change in learner attitude (*savoir-être*), as well as qualitative methods (focus groups) for evaluating the subjective sense of tolerance and empathy (Hoffman 2000: 17).

Phase II: Intervention and Empirical Observation (Act & Observe)

This is the stage of practical application of the model developed in Sections 3 and 4.

- **Strategy Implementation:** Educators in the experimental groups apply the innovative constructivist technologies (such as cooperative learning following Kagan 2001: 98).
- **Monitoring:** Observation is continuous. Educators maintain detailed documentation of the implementation process, recording both the success of the interventions and the

emergence of new ethnocultural challenges (risks).

- **Data Collection:** A post-test is administered, and all qualitative data are gathered for comparative analysis against baseline levels (pre-intervention).

Phase III: Reflection, Analysis, and Sustainability (Reflect & Revise)

This phase closes the cycle and transforms approbation into a tool for the educator's professional development.

- **Effect Analysis:** A critical analysis is performed to determine the extent to which the applied managerial competencies led to the expected social cohesion and where they remained ineffective (e.g., why a certain method works in high school but not in kindergarten).
- **Reflection:** Educators, acting as active researchers, reflect on their own roles. This self-assessment is fundamental to professional transformation and the elimination of their own involuntary cultural biases.
- **Revision and New Cycle:** The analysis results lead to specific methodological changes in the model. Thus, the managerial model is refined and ready for the next iteration of approbation, ensuring its sustainability and flexibility in the face of ever-changing ethnocultural diversity.

CONCLUSION: THE INTERCULTURAL IMPERATIVE AND THE ETHICAL CALL TO ACTION

The analysis presented demonstrates that the transition "From Multicultural Risk to Intercultural Resource" is not merely a pedagogical best practice; it is a non-negotiable ethical and strategic imperative for the 21st-century educational institution. The ethnocultural heterogeneity that characterizes contemporary society poses a dynamic challenge that demands proactive managerial leadership from the educator.

The educator's role transcends traditional teaching boundaries, positioning them as the chief architect of social cohesion and the primary agent of transformation. By activating the required intercultural competencies (Cognitive, Affective, Behavioral), the educator moves beyond the simple management of difference to the modeling of a polylogue society. The proposed Action Research Cycle (Section 6) validates this model, transforming the theoretical framework into a continuous, self-improving system for sustainable pedagogical intervention.

A Call for Radical Pedagogical Reorientation

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The profound implication of this study is the call for a radical reorientation of professional development. We must abandon the reactive, crisis-management approach in favor of a transformative pedagogical vision rooted in dialogicality (Freire, 1970) and constructivist collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). The success of the educational process can no longer be measured solely by academic standards, but fundamentally by the learners' demonstrated capacity for intercultural communicative competence and the level of social justice achieved within the learning environment.

The future of global education rests not on the uniformity of knowledge, but on the mastery of heterogeneity. The educator, equipped with the managerial competencies detailed herein, holds the moral responsibility to ensure that diversity is not merely tolerated, but strategically leveraged as the most powerful creative resource for human development. The time for passive acknowledgement of difference is over; the era of active, ethical, and innovative intercultural management has begun.

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