

Parejo-Llano, J.L., Ruiz-Requies, I. & González-Pedraza, A. (2020). Refugees: a new intercultural education for global citizenship . *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado*, 23(1), 113-124.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6018/reifop.408541>

## Refugees: a new intercultural education for global citizenship

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### Abstract

Migration has traditionally encompassed the concepts of emigration and immigration. Emigration was the action of leaving a country to go to another one and immigration was entering a different country. However, the negative connotations acquired by the latter term over the years, largely owing to the media, has led to the spread and simple use of migration. Immigration has become a synonym of invasion, abuse of identity documents, mafias, unemployment, violence, crime, drugs, illegality, cultural deviation, religious fanaticism and intolerance, backwardness, etc., while the term migration refers to leaving one's place of origin, either temporarily or permanently, for reasons related to work, family or any other motivation that influences quality of life. Drawing from this idea, this article provides an analysis and theoretical discussion on the origin and evolution of migration movements and their effects on host countries, specifically focusing on the case of Spain, refugees' situation and how the area of education should respond to fight the growing wave of racism and xenophobia in current western multicultural societies, so that a new global citizenship that is more inclusive and diverse can be built.

### Key words

Refugees; intercultural programmes; citizenship; diversity.

## Refugiados: una nueva educación intercultural para una ciudadanía global

### Resumen

Tradicionalmente, la migración ha englobado los conceptos de emigración e inmigración. La emigración era el acto de salir de un país para dirigirte a otro y la inmigración la entrada en otro país. Sin embargo, la connotación negativa que ha adquirido este segundo término a lo

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largo de los años, en gran parte debido a los medios de comunicación, ha provocado que se generalice y se hable únicamente de migración. La inmigración se ha convertido en sinónimo de invasión, de abuso de los papeles identificatorios, con las mafias, de desempleo, de violencia, de crimen, de drogas, de ilegalidad, de desviación cultural, de fanatismo e intolerancia religiosa, de atraso, etc. Mientras que el término migración se refiere a toda persona que abandona su lugar de origen, de manera temporal o permanente, por motivos laborales, familiares o de cualquier otra índole, que influyan en su calidad de vida. Partiendo de esta idea, este artículo realiza un análisis y discusión teórica sobre el origen y evolución de los movimientos migratorios y sus efectos en los países de acogida, centrándonos, en el caso de España, en la situación de los refugiados y la respuesta que desde el ámbito educativo ha de darse para combatir la creciente ola de racismo y xenofobia presente en las sociedades occidentales multiculturales y la configuración de una nueva ciudadanía global, más inclusiva y diversa.

### **Palabras clave**

Refugiados; programas interculturales; ciudadanía; diversidad.

### **Introduction**

International migration is a complex phenomenon that is related to different aspects of our everyday lives and encompasses different movements and situations that affect people of any origin and cultural background. Currently, migration touches all territories and people in an increasingly globalized world (Mcauliffe, & Ruhs, 2018). For this reason, we no longer talk of migrants who move only to improve their quality of life, but a distinction should be made between those who migrate to raise their standard of living, “economic migrants”, and those who must flee their country for political reasons or because of war, “refugees”. If we analyse the evolution of migration flows, the USA still ranks the highest in the number of migrations, although, according to the *World Happiness Report* (Helliwell, Huang, Wang, & Hugh Shiplett, 2018) there is a considerable increase in migration to Europe, brought about, among other factors, by the creation of welfare states and the mounting conflicts that have arisen in Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other African and Asian countries (Doval Adán, 2017). The idea that most migrants leave their country seeking a better quality of life requires a deeper analysis. We are no longer just talking of migrants who move for economic reasons to raise their standard of living, but also of others who are forced to flee their countries for reasons such as politics or armed conflict, namely refugees.

In 2017, Spain registered 31,120 international asylum requests, most of them generated by political or armed conflicts. Nevertheless, only 593 of the people who applied were granted the status of refugee (Spanish Commission for Refugees - CEAR, 2018). According to the Spanish report on racism and xenophobia, 77% of Spanish citizens believe the number of migrants in our country is excessive (Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia, 2018). This translates into harmful ideas against migrants, who are believed to abuse aids, take advantage of public services and have a negative impact on the labour market. This type of prejudices against them leads to a rapid rise in the number of far-right parties, whose proposals are based on the restriction of aids and support for migrants in favour of the native population. Osler, & Starkey (2018) accurately diagnose this issue:

In the face of economic difficulties, demographic change and uncertainties, some welcome authoritarian and populist leaders whose rhetoric suggests easy solutions

to complex problems, blaming the most vulnerable (e.g. refugees, foreigners) for society's ills. A politics of solidarity and hope is derided as those who have suffered the negative impact of globalization, economic crisis and austerity policies are urged to put "our people" first. (p. 1)

Against this social backdrop, this article focuses on refugees as the central theme of a new proposal for intercultural education for the building of global citizenship. The question is whether this subject can and should be approached in the classroom in an active, experiential and cooperative manner, drawing from basic principles of coexistence such as empathy, autonomy, knowledge and recognition of the different cultures, fundamental human rights and children's specific rights (Besalú, 2002; Osler, 2008). The answer to this is approached through an introduction to the origin of migratory movements, the causes and effects of migration, what is meant by refugees, what the conditions and their adaptation to the host country is like and how education should address the issue in the classroom to build global citizenship.

### **1. Origin, evolution, typology and social adaptation of migratory movements**

Migratory movements have been part of territorial reorganization from the very origins of societies. However, they were only small population movements with a limited duration, brought about by labour-related or economic reasons, which started to gain momentum with the industrialization that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, returns to Europe reached unprecedented migration volumes that are explained not only by the huge improvements brought about by transport, but also because a large majority of emigrants had already decided that they would return before leaving, meaning that emigration was understood as something temporary (Sánchez, 2002).

After 1914, with World War One, the characteristics of migration changed, reaching a standstill because of the need for manpower. Eventually, migratory phenomena in Europe increased again driven by the war situation and political scene that several territories were going through (Tapias, 2014). Some of the conflicts that most influenced this phenomenon were the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany in 1933 and the Civil War in Spain and subsequent dictatorship of Franco. The most common reasons that encouraged such movements were socioeconomic and political. Besides, they were mostly migrations from European countries. However, in recent years we are witnessing the opposite phenomenon. Table 1 shows the origin of migrations towards the different continents. As can be observed, there has been an increase in migration flows over the years in all territories, with a predominance of Europe and America as main destinations over the rest of continents.

Even though North America (USA) is still the territory with the largest influx of migrants, there is a noticeable trend towards the European continent. With the end of the wars and the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe became regarded as a strengthened community that had apparently reached the status of welfare state that was much sought by many of the citizens of the neighbouring territories. This, along with the mounting conflicts arisen in territories such as Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other African and Asian countries, has promoted a massive arrival of migrants (Doval Adán, 2017). In this regard, the European continent has become a shelter for those who seek a better economic future and for those who are forced to flee their places of origin. Despite this, according to the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2009), these are not the only grounds for migration. Specifically, table 2 shows the data on the reasons for migration to Spain in 2009.

Table 1

*Migration statistics by continents in 1990 and 2015*

By destination continent	By continent of origin			
	1990	2015	1990	2015
Europe	20	35	20	20
North America	24	50	2	3
South/ Central America	3	3	12	30
Asia	10	12	22	40
Africa	1	2	8	17
Oceania	4	7	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>111</b>

Source: Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs (2018, pp. 4-5)

Table 2

*Data on the reasons for migration to Spain*

Reason for coming to Spain (%)	
Quality of life	40.0
Search for a better job	39.0
Family reunification	32.1
Lack of employment opportunities	22.3
Cost of living	14.3
Climate	11.4
Educational reasons and training opportunities	8.4
Redeployment	5.9
Retirement	3.6
Political reasons	3.0
Temporary stay in transit country	1.1
Religious reasons	0.4
Other	12.1

Source: National Statistics Institute (2009)

Considering the data above, most migrants would be seeking better quality of life when moving from one place to another. However, because of the current situation, this idea is contemplated as something very broad and diverse. Therefore, we no longer speak of migrants who come only in search for a better quality of life, but we distinguish between those who move to raise their standard of living, the so-called “economic migrants”, and those who have been forced to flee their countries for political reasons or because of armed conflict, known as “refugees”.

### 1.1. Migration driven by economic reasons

Economic migrants are people who leave their place of origin seeking a better economic future. This outlook is justified by different economic theories, hypotheses that Arango (2000) and García (2018) address in their papers. The most common among them are push-pull factors, which are based on the idea that there are a series of factors that lead to expulsion or exit from a country (working conditions, poverty, overpopulation, low quality of life, ...) and others that cause attraction (access to a better job, higher remuneration,

...). The neoclassical economics theory would be associated with migration aimed at reducing existing economic imbalances (salary, working hours, employment rate) in countries' diverse labour markets. The new economy of labour migration establishes that the decision to migrate for economic reasons not only falls to the individual but is a family decision, which could be interpreted as a family strategy to obtain different sources of income. And, finally, the dual or complex market theory focuses on the economic factors of the host countries, suggesting that the cause of migrations would be workforce shortage to carry out jobs regarded as inferior in developed countries.

Oyarzun (2008) and Hatton, & Williamson (2014) elaborate on these theories and define the main factors that contribute to the decision of leaving a country. Among them, they emphasize individuals' economic and social expectations, economic risk, wage differences and the supply and demand differences between home and host country. Thus, most economic migrations would be the result of the unbalance between developed countries, generally located in the northern hemisphere, and underdeveloped ones, most of which are in the southern hemisphere. For this reason, migrations would take place from south to north. Even so, migration flows not always follow such direction. Although most migratory movements take place for economic reasons, there is another group of migrants who stand out because of their growing number: those who flee their country to another as close as possible, refugees.

### 1.2. Survival migration: refugees

There is a tendency to think of the issue of refugees as something recent. However, it has been used from the very beginning of societies. Precisely, the refugee status emerges after World War Two because of the need to acknowledge and act against the massive number of European migrants, a time at which a convention is approved establishing the protection of people in circumstances of armed conflict. It must be noted that the adoption of the Geneva Convention (UN, 1951) was an attempt to respond to Europe's post-war situation, and it is in this framework that its definition of refugee should be interpreted (Espinar, 2010). To be considered a refugee, a migrant individual is to fulfil the characteristics agreed in the Convention, which expresses that a refugee is any person who due to well-founded fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions, is out of his or her country of nationality and cannot or, because of such fears, does not wish to rely on the protection of such country; or who, having no nationality and, because of such events, being outside the country where he or she had previously retained permanent residence, cannot or, based on such fears, does not wish to return to it. González (2015) notes that a person only acquires the legal condition of refugee after his or her request for asylum or protection has been accepted.

The word seems to have gained greater relevance in recent years due to the events that have taken place in different countries in conflict. Specifically, according to the European Commission, the number of refugees that arrived in the continent in 2016 would be above one million. Indeed, in such year, only in Spain there were a total of 16,544 protection and asylum applications according to data from the National Statistics Institute (INE), a figure that, as reported by the Spanish Commission for Refugees (2018) almost doubled in 2017. In 2017, Spain received more requests from applicants for international protection than any other year, a total of 31,120, and granted the condition of refugee to only 595 people, denying protection to 65% of the applicants. Table 3 specifies the data related to refugee applications by continent, including also the countries that contribute the largest numbers of refugees.

Table 3

*Data from 2016 on application for refugee status in Spain according to continents*

<b>Asylum-seekers in Spain</b>			
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
Africa	2,215	685	2,900
Argelia	689	72	761
América	3,153	2,864	6,017
Venezuela	2,122	2,074	4,196
Asia	2,451	1,708	4,159
Syria	1,730	1,339	3,069
Unrecognized states	286	113	399
Palestine	260	108	368
Central and Eastern Europe	1,696	1,335	3,031
Ukraine	1,534	1,230	2,764
European Union	1	1	2
Other Europe	16	7	23

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the National Statistics Institute (2016)

According to the data shown in the table above, a large fraction of the refugees comes from Venezuela and Syria, both countries under declared political and armed conflict. This arrival has led to the taking of measures within the host countries such as, for example, the creation of international treaties to determine how to deal with the arrival of refugees. The scope of such treaties also provides for the establishment of cooperation agreements with home countries so that the refugees may remain closer to their territory. In Europe, according to the European Commission, humanitarian aid, land and maritime border security, relocation and return policies have been launched, alongside reforms in asylum policies, such as the obligation to request asylum in the first country of the European Union that they have access to. Nevertheless, such policies have not been able to put a stop to the negative consequences associated with the arrival of migrants to our borders. The difficulties endured by many of these people until their arrival in the European continent has led to an increase in illegal trafficking in persons. Many of the migrants hire mafias to manage to reach the borders of other countries, mafias that are not interested in their passengers arriving alive, but only in the amount of money they pay for accessing a means of transport towards other countries. For this reason, many migrants and refugees embark on a crossing where their chances of touching land alive are scarce. Most such journeys are across the Mediterranean. De Lucas (2016) quantifies the number of deaths resulting from this illegal trafficking: in 2014, 3,072 immigrants died attempting to cross it out of a total of 4,077 deaths at different borders around the world; 30% of the immigrants who died in the Mediterranean sea came from the Middle East and northern Africa, Syria and Eritrea being the main countries of origin; another 30% came from sub-Saharan Africa; 11% from the Horn of Africa; and the nationality of 29% is unknown. The figures show the Commission's lack of effective policies for maritime rescue and hosting in the receiving countries, the sea being the main route of access to our borders. The case of last summer, with the declarations and actions of Matteo Salvini, Minister of the Interior of the Italian Government, was a good example of this. On the other hand, those who do manage to arrive are considered "illegal



migrants”, which noticeably increases the number of people who cannot enjoy decent working, social and economic conditions.

### **1.3. Conditions and adaptation of migrant people in host countries**

Once these people arrive in the territory, there is another problem: what is the impact of such arrival? It should be noted that migration, be it for economic reasons or to escape, is still seen as something negative. Hence, it is difficult for refugees and migrants to normalize their situation. Many of the countries they arrive in have employment policies for those people who are considered “foreigners”. According to Zetter, & Ruaudel (2018), “a restrictive approach to the right to work prevails in most countries (...). These constraints force refugees to use irregular pathways both to enter and to work in the country” (p. 4). In other words, once they reach the country, they have no access to the labour market and are forced to seek marginal jobs where employers often take advantage of their circumstances to pay them poor wages for long working hours. Conversely, this same situation leads to a very high unemployment rate among the migrant population, which, according to the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2018), stands at 20.64% (19.95% men and 21.42% women).

Another of the problems when approaching adaptation in the different territories is cultural difference. Certain authors mention a phenomenon of acculturation, which Zlobina, Basabe, & Páez (2018) define as a series of expressions resulting from continuous contact between different cultures, with the ensuing changes in the cultural characteristics of each of them. However, the truth is very different: those who arrive are usually the ones who must adapt to the territory’s culture, leaving their origins and beliefs behind. When this is not so, disputes arise, and the refugee or migrant can even experience times of social marginalization. This situation can also lead to the creation of ghettos or population nuclei where different people of a same country, religion or cultural and economic background gather, increasing the division between the country’s native population and those who are considered “foreigners”.

Considering all the above, a change of perceptions towards migrants who are forced to flee their countries is crucial. To achieve such change, education to build an intercultural and global world should begin in schools. The following section starts from the idea of the classroom as a diverse space for cultural coexistence and a setting for the eradication of prejudices and stereotypes towards refugees, and for their inclusion (understanding and appreciation) in society.

## **2. The path from multiculturalism to interculturality**

Having looked at the key aspects of migration, it is necessary to address certain key concepts that are related to it from a social and educational perspective. When speaking of interculturality, it is frequent to mistake it for the idea of multiculturalism. However, even though one encompasses the other, they are not synonyms. According to Hernández (2007), “although multiculturalism has diverse meanings, it can broadly be understood as the phenomenon that indicates the existence and coexistence of several cultural groups in a same territory, situation or within a same state” (p. 431). As can be observed, multiculturalism is regarded as the simultaneity of various cultures or societies within a same territory. Likewise, the relationships among such cultures are of a respectful, tolerant and peaceful nature that encourages integration of all the individuals into the space they share. However, interculturality goes one step further, connecting the former with other concepts to achieve not only the integration of cultures, but also their interaction. For Besalú (2002), intercultural education is, above all, an attitude and behaviour towards the type of

relationships that are built among cultures that coexist in a specific environment and context. This author suggests that the affective, cognitive, social and cultural needs of individuals and groups should be met, making it possible for each culture to express its solution to common problems.

Building on this idea, interculturality is an education for and with everyone, based on the plurality of societies. Therefore, interculturality includes the term “diversity”, which, in turn, is described as the differences that define living beings in biological, social or cultural terms. There is also an inclusion and exclusion dichotomy from the perspective of schools, two terms that Booth, Nes, & Stromstad (2003) define as follows: “inclusion and educational exclusion are related to justice for all in society. It is a political and therefore conflictive issue. It’s an ongoing process, not a state that can be achieved, nor a certificate that once acquired can’t be lost” (p.168).

From a teaching perspective, it is important to stress the relevance of these concepts in today’s world and, particularly, in schools. Therefore, the following sections are devoted to how education should provide an intercultural response from the point of view of citizenship for the building of an increasingly diverse, in nature and composition, and global society.

### **2.1. Educational response to interculturality: inclusion**

Intercultural education has become an almost compulsory content for twenty-first century citizens. There is a growing demand in current society of a series for different types of knowledge than those we are used to. The fact that the world has become a global diversity space leads to the need for current and future citizens to understand, coexist, respect and interact with other cultures and outlooks on life. Because of this, many advocate an intercultural education based on coexistence and understanding of different cultures, since an education built on interculturality can foster people’s development and growth so that they might learn to coexist with, accept and recognize other people whose way of life is different (Torrego González, Gómez Sánchez, & Parejo, 2011). What children learn today will be reflected in their actions when they are adults (Valero, 2001). Schools, on their part, are a space for the reproduction of such citizen diversity, so much so that they have been criticized arguing that, far from compensating and valuing such diversity (from the social, economic, developmental, psychological or physical point of view), what they have generated is a perpetuation of cultural patterns of inequality (Bourdieu, & Passeron, 2019; Sidicaro, 2009).

From a traditional viewpoint, this diversity has been interpreted as a problem that should be dealt with. Students’ principle of individualization, which establishes the need for personalized attention according to their characteristics and needs, was disregarded in favour of equal attention and results for the entire class. Building on this approach, differences were addressed by means of reinforcement programmes and curricular adaptations so that boys and girls who were considered “different” could achieve levels that were similar to those of the rest. However, such understanding of diversity is changing, and differences are currently regarded as a benefit in the classroom. Each child should reach the fullest possible development, which promotes a higher level of social growth and cooperation within the class group. Classrooms would therefore be a “microworld” where education based on respect, tolerance, coexistence and understanding of differences is fostered through a new intercultural way of teaching that may help students to fully develop and that encourages interaction and exchange among different cultures on the basis of ethnic and cultural respect (Fernández, & Sedano, 1998; Peñalva, & Aguilar, 2011).



If we look carefully at the current regulations that prevail in Spain, we will find different references to diversity and differences. However, there are no explicit references to interculturality as such, moral and civic competence being one of the key competences to be developed at all educational stages (LOMCE, 2013) and civic and constitutional education, equity, inclusion and development of transversal values being something to address in all areas of the primary education curriculum (Royal Decree, 126/2014). According to this, it can be stated that intercultural education is something that must necessarily be brought into the classroom, since one of education's general principles is to train children so that they are capable of respecting and valuing differences. Likewise, twenty-first century society, as already mentioned, is multicultural and global, which is why children should learn to coexist and interact with the world they live in. And, because, as noted, there are no specific references to interculturality in the curricular regulations in force, teachers themselves are currently responsible for such education, which justifies the importance of addressing this new pedagogical project.

## **2.2. Pedagogical building of new citizenship in a global context**

The widespread idea that migrants are given aids at the expense of "our" people leads to restrictions in many of the public services and healthcare intended for these people (Osler, & Starkey, 2018). The wave of racism and xenophobia that is being spurred from social and political spheres can only be fought through a solid and coherent project of citizenship information and training. Gallardo (2009) proposes four basic pillars to structure this project: learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be, which are consistent with those proposed by the UNESCO (Delors, 1996). When talking of coexistence, cooperation and participation, we are referring to the concept of education for the sake and benefit of citizenship, in principle regarded as something unique to the citizens of each country. This notion has currently evolved, and citizenship is regarded as something global, worldwide and cosmopolitan (Starkey, 2018; UNESCO, 2015). Teaching no longer draws from a nationalist feeling, but from the point of view of citizens who coexist in a globalized world. It is no longer about just training people to be qualified to carry out a job, but also about education for respect, tolerance, cooperation, coexistence and participation in democratic life and interculturality.

Banks (2017) reproduces the account of a teacher called Verónica who endorses the need for the intervention of educators: "She felt that police officers who were working with schools to tackle terrorism and extremism were 'dealing with it the wrong way'... You can't just talk at kids. The best way is through citizenship education (...)" (p. 145). The traditional approach to resolving the increase in racist behaviours and attitudes is not the right one. Citizenship education is the answer to be able to instil values, understanding and awareness of the idea of multicultural contexts and is therefore an essential training requirement for the shaping of twenty-first century society. Its contents allow the possibility of working from a perspective for the sake and benefit of the democratic citizen. Therefore, it should be included in schools as a mechanism for the internalization of and reflection on the world's problems, inequality and poverty and, in our case, the issue of refugees. Thus, the rights and duties of world citizenry should be worked on, including political commitment, as an attempt to help young people to understand and promote democracy (Starkey, 2012). This, however, does not mean that citizenship education is an infallible formula to eradicate all the problems of the world and our society, but it does indeed foster children's medium and long-term awareness of the social changes that are taking place and helps them to be able to live together, participate and understand the causes of inequalities, conflicts and wars. Hence, this can be regarded as a way of training critical citizens who are able to help and interact with any person that may require it, regardless of their cultural, personal,

political or religious background. Based on the ideas outlined above, we believe that it is essential to address the topic of migrations in the classroom, specifically those that involve fleeing one's country of origin, to build social awareness of the situation of the human rights of these people as citizens of a global world.

### 3. Conclusions

We are currently going through one of the most important periods of migratory movements since World War Two. This fact, together with citizens' unawareness, triggers an increase in racist and xenophobic attitudes and behaviours in territories where refugees are received. This translates into negative ideas against them such as that they abuse aids, take advantage of public services and have a negative impact on the labour market.

Global citizenship education draws from current social reality and attempts to work from the cultural and social perspective that characterizes a multicultural context. Hence the need to provide an educational answer, from an intercultural angle, placing emphasis on topics such as explaining the condition of refugee through life accounts, stories of flight, letters, songs, dances from the countries of origin, discussions on the reasons for a person to make the decision of leaving, cases of injustice and identification of infringements of rights and freedoms, values such as cooperation, and empathy with refugees, since it is only from the learning of equality in diversity that attitudes such as racism and xenophobia, which are present in our society, can be eradicated. Global citizenship education allows us to humanize and shift the focus of attention away from criminalization ideas and policies. Such global citizenship should be at the heart of a critical education that may provide children with the skills to question discourses and stereotypes that seek to build a reality where the humanity of migrants appears blurred and tainted.

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