

Dialogue definition
history intercultural
dialogue theology
religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Like never before, global challenges have local impacts. Local events can have global impacts. This compels us to strengthen cooperation – expand the space for dialogue – and replace barriers of distrust with bridges of understanding.” (Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon)

The word dialogue is a combination of the two Greek words: dia, meaning “ through,” and logos, interpreted as “ word or meaning.” To engage in dialogue is therefore to engage in making meaning through the spoken/written word.

The societies cultural environment is changing quickly and becoming more and more diversified. Cultural diversity is an essential condition of human society, brought about by cross-border migration, the claim of national and other minorities to a distinct cultural identity, the cultural effects of globalisation, the growing interdependence between all world regions and the advances of information and communication media. More and more individuals are living in a “ multicultural” normality and have to manage their own multiple cultural affiliations.

Cultural diversity is also an economic, social and political plus, which needs to be developed and adequately managed. On the other hand, increasing cultural diversity brings about new social and political challenges. Cultural diversity often triggers fear and rejection. Stereotyping, racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination and violence can threaten peace and the very essence of local and national communities.

Dialogue between cultures, the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation, is an antidote to rejection and violence. Its

<https://assignbuster.com/dialogue-definition-history-intercultural-dialogue-theology-religion-essay/>

objective is to enable people to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging.

2. 1. 1. Definition

In political parlance, the term “ intercultural dialogue” is still only loosely defined. There is no accepted definition for Intercultural Dialogue. The term is an adaptation from other terms, all of which remain current, such as multiculturalism, social cohesion and assimilation.

One of best formulation at the moment is perhaps the terminology used by the Council of Europe in its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, which states:

“ Intercultural Dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage [...] that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s global perception”

In this definition, “ open and respectful” means “ based on the equal value of the partners”; “ exchange of views” stands for every type of interaction that reveals cultural characteristics; “ groups” stands for every type of collective that can act through its representatives (family, community, associations, peoples); “ culture” includes everything relating to ways of life, customs, beliefs and other things that have been passed on to us for generations, as well as the various forms of artistic creation; “ world perception” stands for values and ways of thinking.

In a general sense, the objective of intercultural dialogue is to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging. Intercultural dialogue can also be a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts by enhancing the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. More specifically, the following goals have been outlined by the Council of Europe:

To share visions of the world, perceptions of the world, to understand and learn from those that do not see the world with the same perspective;

To identify similarities and differences between different cultural traditions and perceptions;

To achieve a consensus that disputes should not be resolved by violence;

To help manage cultural diversity in a democratic manner, by making the necessary adjustments to all types of existing social and political arrangements;

To bridge the divide between those who perceive diversity as a threat and those who view it as an enrichment;

To share best practices particularly in the areas of intercultural dialogue, the democratic management of social diversity and the promotion of social cohesion;

To develop jointly new projects, new practices, new concepts, new philosophies;

Easier than a definition is a description of the conditions, the “enabling factors” that characterize a true, meaningful intercultural dialogue. Based on existing experience, the Council of Europe propose at least six crucial conditions that must be fulfilled from the very outset, or achieved during the process:

Equal dignity of all participants;

Voluntary engagement in dialogue;

A mindset, on all sides, characterised by openness, curiosity and commitment, and the absence of a desire to “win” the dialogue;

A readiness to look at both cultural similarities and differences;

A minimum degree of knowledge about the distinguishing features of one’s own and the “other” culture;

The ability to find a common language for understanding and respecting cultural differences.

But It should be remembered which is in the root of the concept of intercultural dialogue, it is based on human dignity, thinking and democracy. It privileges human beings and considers humanity at a central point. It enhances the role of each individual in the structure of the world, despite their differences in, among many things, language, race, color, tribe, religion, and nationality, they enjoy a variety of potential capabilities and talents that complement each other.[1]

Today's society has a new dynamic in itself. It is characterized by cultural diversity and proximity between cultures. There is no more cultural isolation, every culture is near each other, they interact with each other, they share ideas and thoughts, and is through that, through the contact with the other that the self can describe himself.

The encounter is inevitable, and in every encounter there is communication, expression of the inner world, of the attitude towards the other. And it is not limited to the verbalization, but all the different and unique languages that people use to contact to each other in every encounter: with the face, the reaction, the gesture, the way we look. Before the first word is said, an inner world is being exteriorised, transmitted to the other. (Banús, Enrique)

The world is much closer right now. Every moment of life, every daily-life situation can be transformed, or not, in intercultural dialogue. In a certain sense, every contact is an intercultural contact – because culture is essentially linked to the human being (Banús, Enrique). Culture is preserved by article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[2], but not only that, it is a natural element of human life: is the way people express themselves, the way they think, they love, they hate – it's in every aspect of the human existence. It's " the « cultural world» of everyone, a « cultural world» made by a very complex – a very rich – mixture of elements, coming from different traditions and from our own way of life, our own biography. The « cultural world» is a very personal one." (Banús, Enrique)

The communication is the base of human behaviour, the social space, is the space of communication, the space of normal social life, which is made by

the net of messages we are sending and receiving, we are coding and decoding. And because we are carrying our « cultural world» with us, all these messages are cultural messages, and all the dialogues are intercultural dialogues. (Banús, Enrique)

The contact with other human beings is an integral part of the everyday life, and in that contact, our « cultural world» is meeting other « cultural worlds». And there a fullness of communications is established: greetings, looks, conversations. These contacts are sometimes more cordial, sometimes cool, according to the part of the space everyone shares with this concrete « other». (Banús, Enrique)

“ Intercultural dialogue is maybe not only an art, but also a change of paradigm, because it means to overcome the normal procedures, the normal strategies for mental survival in a complex world.” (Banús, Enrique)

And, by the necessity of contact, of communication, prejudices and stereotypes are built naturally, by experiencing/confirming « our» – collective – identity in antagonism to « the other». This is a very common procedure to experience collective identity.(Banús, Enrique)

Intercultural dialogue is in this sense a change of paradigm, the recognition that « the other» is not only a threatening antagonist, but a necessary complement; in the dialogue the identity is experienced, precisely in the capacity to establish a dialogue everyone is realising his or her « being himself or herself» – and, of course, he or she is clarifying his or her thoughts when expressing them to « the other»(Banús, Enrique).

All the mentioned tendencies of seeing antagonisms between « identity» and « alterity» are paradoxically reinforced in societies, like nowadays, in which the dominant presence of the state is crumbling away¹⁵, with (partially strong) regional/national movements within the states and with a globalisation and interrelation which also diminish the state's power. (Banús, Enrique) Moreover, the societies are also becoming diverse in themselves, in their inner structure:

squares and places are not only « ours», but reflect the world plurality. The local level is approaching the global level. This can create uncertainty, and new forms of collective identity have become popular – so that aforementioned « cultural identity», which seems to forget that « culture» is at first a personal right and a personal quality, and sometimes gives priority to the constituency of the group and not to the personal realisation of a human being. (Banús, Enrique)

Intercultural dialogue seems to suggest that culture is always and every time a positive manifestation of the human spirit. After the 20th century with its Auschwitzs and Gulags a naive exaltation of culture and also of dialogue is no more possible. The culture includes the best and the worst made by the human being – and all that what lies between the best and the worst.(Banús, Enrique)

So, talk about intercultural dialogue include discussing the transmission of the necessary critical sense to avoid cultural relativism and to combine tolerance and intolerance, to reinforce the capacity to overcome distances and build bridges.

History

On the stage of international politics, intercultural dialogue first made appearance in explicit reaction to Huntington's theory, Clash of Civilization. It was by the then President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, who used the term of " dialogue among civilisations"[3]in a speech to the General Assembly of The United Nations On the 4th November 1998, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution that designated 2001 as the Year of the ' Dialogue among Civilizations'. In the same year, on 11 September, with the attacks to the United States, leaving forgotten the " Year of the Dialogue among Civilizations", on the contrary, it gave more visibility to the future wrote by Huntington, what rest of that year was an atmosphere of fear, mistrust and war.

Several years later, on 2004, a new UN initiative was launched under the title " Alliance of Civilizations", composed of mostly states, and also several international organizations, was established to support an initiative in fostering global cooperation on cross-cultural issues and to promote initiatives aimed at encouraging dialogue and building bridges among societies and communities.

In the meanwhile, the question has become a major focal point for the activities of UNESCO. UNESCO see's the cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is one of the main pillars of UNESCO's action.

' Safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage as a shared resource for dialogue and sustainable development, fostering creative diversity, countering ignorance and intolerance, strengthening intercultural

competences: all play a determinant role for intercultural dialogue. Within this larger framework, which also encompasses interreligious dialogue, special focus is placed to encourage cultural pluralism at the local, regional and national level as well as regional and sub-regional initiatives, highlighting the importance of transfers and exchanges between cultures.’[4]

And by reaffirming the importance of culture, UNESCO adopted ‘ The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity’ at the UNESCO General Conference in November 2001(UNESCO, 2002) and reaffirmed more recently by the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005). It views cultural diversity as the common heritage which unites humanity, a source of individual but also collective wealth. It is “ as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature”, is part of the democratic framework of society, and one of the roots of economic as well as personal development (UNESCO, 2002, Articles 1, 2 & 3). All people have the right to cultural expression in their language of choice, and have the right to access the means of expression and dissemination of their culture (Articles 5 & 6). Importantly, cultural rights are seen as an “ ethical imperative” implying “ acommitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples” (Article 4).

Cultural exchange is fundamental to the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Produced in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attack on the WorldTrade Centre, the Declaration represents a rejection of ethnic hatred and an affirmation of intercultural dialogue as a guarantee of peace <https://assignbuster.com/dialogue-definition-history-intercultural-dialogue-theology-religion-essay/>

(Matsuura, forward to UNESCO, 2002). Moreover, intercultural dialogue is seen as necessary for creativity which, though having its roots in cultural tradition, also “ flourishes in contact with other cultures” (Article 7).

The United States has often been characterised as the world’s melting pot, but the terms of the debate in Europe are somewhat different.[5]

Historically, the European experience has been of rich learning culture process in the objective to coexist together, regardless of the political, religious, linguistic and cultural differences. Some of the most aggressive and violent events in the world happened between the countries of the EU, and after the second world war a peaceful coexistence was not just a hope, but an immediate need.

Europe, beside all of their problems, can be characterized now as a peaceful, economically successful and increasingly politically integrated environment. But the challenge of ‘ the other’ has not gone away however. If anything, with each passing enlargement, with each political crises, with each economic situation, the challenges that face Europe grow.

“ Intercultural Dialogue can be seen as one of the ways to promote mutual understanding, to a better living together and a strong active sense of European citizenship and belonging.”

By comparison with other international organisations, the European Union has not given broad public attention to intercultural dialogue than until recently, with the exception of Commission President Jacques Delors’s initiative ‘ A Soul for Europe’ in 1992[6], which believed on the Europe’

construction of a something above economics and legal interchanged system, his aim was to build a spiritual and ethical dimension to the EU.

The Council of Europe can be described as a organization that has great influence in the intercultural dialogue, giving it high political importance. It contributes to the core of the Council of Europe, namely preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The First Summit of Heads of State and Government of member states on 1993, which affirmed that cultural diversity characterised Europe's rich heritage and that tolerance was the guarantee of an open society, led to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on 1995, the establishment of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the launching of the European Youth Campaign against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance, " All Different – All Equal".[7]

The Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government on 2005 identified intercultural dialogue as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society.

It was also the Council of Europe on 2008, that put forward " the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue"; whereby religion is considered to constitute one possible difference in identity, alongside " ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds".[8]Even so, by this definition, intercultural dialogue is vaguely defined as an exchange of views between different individuals or groups at different levels:

“ within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world” (Council of Europe 2008).

On EU dynamic, one important document that relates to the importance of the intercultural dialogue is the White Paper[9]. His objective is to formulate a coherent and long-term policy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue within Europe and between Europe and its neighbouring regions, the Council of Europe is preparing a “ White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue”. [10]

“ White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue”, emphatically argues, in the name of the governments of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, that the common future of EU depends on the ability to safeguard and develop human rights, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law and to promote mutual understanding. It reasons that the intercultural approach offers a forward-looking model for managing cultural diversity. It proposes a conception based on individual human dignity, embracing their common humanity and common destiny. It affirms that if there is a European identity to be realised, it will be based on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as respect for the equal dignity of every individual. [11]

The White Paper is addressed to policy makers and practitioners at national, regional and local levels, to whom it will provide guidelines and analytical and methodological tools for the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue of the Council of Europe will formulate the political orientations of the Organisation in this area. It will also

serve as a reference document for action at national, regional and local levels.

The White Paper will evaluate the results of recent activities of the Council of Europe, of examples of good practice and recent scientific studies on intercultural dialogue, and will formulate the conclusions to be drawn for their implementation.

The White Paper will formulate a long-term vision of what is to be expected from a policy promoting intercultural dialogue within European societies, across national borders and between Europe and neighbouring regions.

The White Paper will suggest policies and initiatives that the various stakeholders may consider implementing in different contexts, in order to support intercultural dialogue and to maximize its benefits.

The White Paper will identify, more specifically, how the Council of Europe – through model actions and follow-up programmes – can help create better conditions for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, how it can support dialogue and how it can pursue its policy of dialogue with neighbouring regions.

The White Paper will provide standards and tools, in particular examples of good practice.

The discussion on Intercultural dialogue in Europe reached its apex with the instauration of the ‘ European Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ in 2008, by the european parliament and of the council.[12]

This Year aimed to promote Intercultural Dialogue and raise general awareness on the importance of developing an ‘ active European citizenship’. The key messages were targeted at young people but also the disadvantaged. Civil Society was in general encouraged to mobilise and get involved. Each country had a national coordinating body, and the civil society sector was coordinated through the Rainbow Platform[13]- now the Platform for Intercultural Europe. The budget for the year was 10 million, which focused on 7 flagship projects, the co-financing of a number of national projects, an information and awareness raising campaign and finally evaluation.

The EU has drawn on the experience of other international organisations when it set up to the declaration of the European ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ in 2006. the main emphasis of the EU’s approach to the ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ focused on questions of social cohesion and the emergence of a common identity inside the European polity.

Unlike the approach of the UN, questions of violent conflict and possible clashes of collective identity did not figure at all in the Commission’s proposal, it can be seen by the lack of discussion in areas such as conflict, peace or war.

Its very first sentence states instead, in almost tautological manner, that “ intercultural dialogue is intimately linked to the fundamental ambition underlying the construction of Europe, namely to bring together the peoples of Europe”.(Bokern et all)

In the further text, explicit reference is made to the Strategy of Lisbon, intending to make the EU the most competitive economic space in the world, but no mention is made at all of possible lines of conflict. This focus does not correspond to the original initiative for the ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’: as it was drawn from the Commission’s first conference under the title “ Peace, Security and Stability: Intercultural Dialogue” in March 2002, at the invitation of the then President Romano Prodi, interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding were a principal point of concern.

The concept of intercultural dialogue underlying the ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ is not clear. Its main focus was upon education – arts and heritage-, youth, culture and sports. Further emphasis was placed on building citizenship as one major purpose of the ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’; religion was only mentioned at the sidelines.

It is no coincidence, then, that the seven flagship projects of the ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ were mainly situated in the artistic sector, putting much emphasis on multilingualism, youth and urban culture. Some of the subsidised groups were already beneficiaries of the previous “ European Year of Equal Opportunities for All” in 2007.

It is clear to conclude that the EU’s ‘ Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ had a very different approach from the other international organizations or European politics regarding intercultural dialogue.

intercultural dialogue approaches

“ The starting assumption is that intercultural dialogue, to be fruitful, must be developed from a basic code of values, that aside from being universal in <https://assignbuster.com/dialogue-definition-history-intercultural-dialogue-theology-religion-essay/>

character and therefore possible to share, must also be a trans-cultural facilitator.” (Mascia, Marco p. 448)

There is still relatively little information on mechanisms for implementing dialogue as well as on ways how to ensure effective policies in this field. But it is possible to reduce the possibilities to two approaches, the short-term and the long-term approach, realizing that dialogue is the end but also the means to achieve these goals.

Inside of the European Union Year of Intercultural dialogue, different areas were worked on. Such projects, have short period of time, but were made to have impact in a long term range. These projects were: Intercultural dialogue through musical and cultural education[14], Capacity building for initiatives supporting intercultural dialogue[15]and National action plans for intercultural dialogue[16].

But in this session, will be discussed the approaches to mediation, gender, ICT and religion and their connection to intercultural dialogue.

It will be shown their importance, influence and challenges that it represents inside an intercultural dialogue perception. And maybe it will present new perspectives in dealing with each other.

Intercultural Mediation

As social or cultural tensions are increased by the international problems, such as minorities or immigration, the public perception on intercultural mediation has grown. It doesn't matter the field, it can be seen nowadays being applied to informal and formal education, in social work, in

international affairs or in the research field. And as response to this, training programmes, special networks and university studies were installed, frequently following the theories of known specialists such as John Paul Lederach on 1995[17] or Johan Galtung, on 2000[18] (Fischer and Wiesand). Galtung, on his “ conflict theory”, points to conflict “ both as Destroyer or Creator, as potentially dangerous... because of violence and as a golden opportunity to create something new”.

Generally speaking, ICM or Intercultural mediation is being considered or installed, whenever relationships between groups and individuals with different cultural backgrounds have been cut, are misbalanced or become tense or hostile, which, in its turn, strongly affects the basic life of specific groups in the population or threatens security. In that case, mediators can facilitate non-violent and culture sensitive resolution practices (Fischer and Wiesand). Designed mainly to address the needs of individuals or smaller groups or to de-escalate business conflicts, the following definition of Intercultural Mediation of Bernd Mueller-Jaquier shows a strong affinity to some approaches towards intercultural dialogue:

“ Intercultural mediation is a special, usually voluntary, discussion and consensual decision-making process in which one or more impartial persons – the mediator(s) – assist people, organizations, and communities in conflict to work toward a variety of goals. Parties in the mediation process are encouraged to:

improve communication processes, understanding culture specific interaction rules, values, conflict resolution strategies and symbols;

<https://assignbuster.com/dialogue-definition-history-intercultural-dialogue-theology-religion-essay/>

improve relationships and empathy;

use mediation rules to minimize, avoid or enhance involvement in the legal/judicial system;

work toward mutual understanding to resolve a problem or dispute in order to finally

reach their own decisions, resolve underlying conflicts, and prevent problems from recurring.”

(Bernd Mueller-Jaquier , 2002)[19]

Until recently, however, most of Intercultural mediation activities took place in world regions outside of the EU territory that suffered from wars and violent conflicts. On Europe, intergovernmental organisations and European member states assumed an important responsibility by providing help and assistance in fostering conflict transformation by peaceful means, be it as part of their foreign policies or of their development cooperation activities – e. g. in South Africa, Rwanda, Palestine, Sri Lanka, South East Europe. In addition to a provision of personal mediation services, training programmes to teach Intercultural mediation techniques to future mediators on the ground have been installed with the help of experienced mediators. (Fischer and Wiesand)

A great exemple of the role of intercultural mediation is in the case of Yugoslav wars, from 1991 to 2001, which can be considered as one of the deepest political and humanitarian crises Europe has experienced during the last 60 years, but also because of unresolved frictions between traditional
<https://assignbuster.com/dialogue-definition-history-intercultural-dialogue-theology-religion-essay/>

minorities and majorities in that multi-ethnic region, attention for realistic methods of conflict resolution has been particularly high in the region. As pointed out by specialists Sanjin Dragojević and Milena Dragičević in their publication about “ Intercultural Mediation”, they affirm it was a basic element of many activities in that region, since also the new states knew more or less segregated societies, which hindered a fruitful development.

“ The absence of a process of dialogue and communication between ethnic groups of this country could be seen as a fundamental social obstacle, as well as, an obstacle for overall development. A lot of time has passed since the war ended, yet it can be asserted that the problem is not only lacking resolution but has also gained in importance and strength. This is why UNESCO began an intercultural education project with the aim of connecting, informing, and stimulating the youngest generation of local cultural activists across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim being that they would become the creators of cultural mediation projects in their surroundings, surpassing the borders of ethnic communities and national countries. Thus, the regional component seemed like a relevant framework for both reflection and potential implementation of basic efforts and projects in this area.” (Milena Dragičević and Sanjin Dragojević)

Mediation efforts took place on different levels and at different stages prior, during and after the conflicts[Share this: Facebook Twitter Reddit LinkedIn WhatsApp