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Educating social workers without boundaries through the Intercultural Social Intervention Model (ISIM)

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Some innovative and replicable aspects about the main contents of one educational program for social workers in Spanish are presented. The program is based on the critical analysis of implicit models and the development of intercultural competences. Our Intercultural Social Intervention Model (ISIM) is the central axis (theoretical and practical) of the educational program, which is used and inspired by other practice theoretical models and perspectives from the south and the north: concientización or consciousness raising model, anti-oppressive model, empowerment and advocacy model, and the transformative mediation model; though adapted to multicultural realities with more complexity and diversity than those in which the mentioned models developed. It is an international postgraduate program which is open to final-year bachelor students of social work. The program combines remote instruction (off-line and online activities) and on-campus activities (face-to-face online classes and workshops, practices in the field, collaborative groups, etc.).

> No problem can be solved by the same consciousness which created it.
>
> Albert Einstein

In our program we teach professionals to advocate for vulnerable groups, making them aware of processes for implementing empowerment at an individual and collective level, in different countries and multicultural social contexts. Our innovative program in social work education is ten years old and is based on the critical analysis of implicit models (unconscious and frequently ethnocentric) and the development of intercultural competences (mindset and skillset). We have developed a model called Intercultural Social Intervention Model (ISIM) which is the central axis (theoretical and practical) of our educational program. ISIM is used and inspired by other practice theoretical models, theories and perspectives from the south (mainly) and the north: concientización or consciousness raising model (Freire 1967 to 1996; Boal 1978; Kaplún 1983, 1985), anti-oppressive model (Solomon 1976), empowerment and advocacy models (Rose & Black 1985), and the transformative mediation model (Bush & Folger 1994), etc. We have adapted all the models to

multicultural realities with complexity and diversity to a greater extent than those in which they were developed, and added clearer practice and application components.

From the academic point of view, our program is also innovative because it is directed at international students (up until now people from 21 different countries have taken part in it). It includes degree and post-degree training, and the teachers have very diverse training profiles, with practical experience in several countries of the north and of the south (Europe and Latin America). The practices are carried out in different countries, always in multi-ethnic and culturally diverse contexts. It is also the only social work education program in Spanish with these characteristics, and our graduates and postgraduates have a very high percentage of employment. The following sections describe some of the relevant aspects of our training, which can be applicable to other contexts.

Educational program foundation

The reasons for the educational program 'Migration and cultural diversity' are new realities which offer new opportunities to education of social workers.

Cultural diversity constitutes a central issue of increasing importance in current societies. Cultural pluralism is, therefore, a fact that represents new challenges and opportunities for social work: practical challenges of an intellectual, emotional, political and ethical nature, and specific technical challenges. But migration is also a reality that offers social workers new opportunities, since cultural diversity opens new possibilities of professional action and makes us critically rethink and reformulate traditional interventions. This circumstance, in addition, makes us reflect in depth about our professional praxis, our action and thinking frameworks. It confronts us with the commitment of our professional mission, values and principles of social work.

As a consequence of globalisation, social workers are immersed in constant change processes. The fact of migration, and the intercultural challenge it implies, imposes on social workers the necessity of continuous training and updating, especially in aspects that are not traditionally considered in the curriculum. The focus on the most disadvantaged and excluded people is an inherent element in this profession, and the intercultural challenge can help us reclaim it in these times of strong pressure against the welfare state, of uncertainty and disorientation over our professional role, and of loss of initiative in many social, political, university, etc. interventions. In these difficult moments for the Welfare State, social work has to 'swim upstream' against a competitive, individualist and exhausted society where populist and demagogic currents that encourage racism and xenophobia are dominant. In this context, traditional procedures, tools, theoretical frames, training, resources, and the way of conceiving professional attention within social services, no longer help and are no longer effective.

Authors and experts in different countries have warned of the necessity of a new professional training and our program aims to provide an effective response to this challenge (Ronnau 1994; Legault 1997; Verbunt 1994, 1999, 2004; Lévesque 2004, 2006; Fook 2004, 2012; Aguilar 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Aguilar & Buraschi 2012; Payne & Askeland 2008; Novak & van Ewijk 2010; among others). We consider that it is necessary to develop new knowledge and skills, as well as personal sensitivity and new attitudes in the way of being and acting professionally. It is an educational process where it is essential to put together an intellectual attitude of openness towards the 'other' along with

a deep self-analysis and self-discovery, integrating cognitive and affective elements in our reflections.

Aims and approach: professionals in critical-transformative intercultural perspective

Our goal is to teach professionals advocacy for vulnerable groups, to make them capable of implementing processes of empowerment at an individual and collective level. To achieve it, the educational program offers an axiological, theoretical, methodological and practical training in terms of professional intervention with migrants (particularly in the field of intercultural mediation, although not exclusively), as well as knowledge, skills and abilities in research applied to the international migration field and intercultural studies, and all of that from an interdisciplinary perspective of social intervention and a critical-transforming intercultural focus.

The dominant social intervention models reflect the diverse response methods that are usually given to the management of our societies' diversity. These models have proved to be ineffective in the field of civic cohabitation for an inclusive citizenship. The more frequent responses are the following three:

- Subaltern assimilation: a model based on the absorption of ethnic-cultural minorities, with these minorities ending up occupying a subaltern position within the social structure.
- Culturalist racism: a perspective that 'racialises' cultural differences, reducing people's complexity to a few simplistic categories.
- Intercultural aesthetic: consisting of a superficial celebration of cultural diversity, more similar to colonial exoticism than to the intercultural perspective.

The limitations and weaknesses of these three responses make impossible the construction of an inclusive citizenship, impeding the transformation and overcoming of inequalities and power asymmetries in the different social groups' intercultural coexistence. It is necessary, therefore, to develop an intercultural critical and transforming response, that is, a valid alternative to overcome those barriers, inequalities and asymmetries that are inherent in the three mentioned responses. Interculturalism is a type of normative response to the fact of cultural plurality, which is based on an effective coexistence, learning, and mutual enrichment. This focus differs from and is opposed to other normative responses such as 'assimilation' of minority cultures by the majority culture and is an alternative to the mere 'mutual tolerance' of a certain multiculturalism ('equal but separated'). The intercultural focus we propose is critical because it implies the deconstruction of the subaltern assimilation and the culturalist racism as well as the overcoming of certain reductionist forms of understanding interculturalism. Our model is also transforming because it proposes rethinking our way of conceiving identity, culture, participation and citizenship.

Our critical-transforming focus of interculturalism is not limited to the recognition of the difference and the promotion of positive interaction between people or groups with different referential cultural horizons; it also supports the fight against social, economic and political inequalities as well as ethnic, racial and cultural discriminations.

Theoretical and practical central axis

Implicit models, ethnocentrism and prejudice of social workers

The implementation of social politics destined for the integration of migrant people depends in large part on professional practice. Social workers have been professionally socialised in monocultural and north-occidental clinic-therapeutic types of intervention models, which have not proved to be the most appropriate to address intervention within the new cultural diversity realities. In short, not all the theoretical and methodological professional intervention models in the social field are appropriate, opportune or pertinent if we analyse them from an intercultural perspective, especially from the point of view of the construction of an inclusive citizenship.

We should clearly distinguish the difference between an implicit and explicit intervention model. The social intervention explicit model is a reflexive and coherent set of thoughts and concepts referring to principles, theories, strategies and actions, built on the basis of population categories that then draw a social intervention guide related to a specific problem. Implicit models are, for their part, a referential frame and a simplified and schematic construction of reality that provide an explanation of it and form a general referential outline that guides practice in an unreflective way.

Although it may be embarrassing and hard to accept, we need to become aware of the fact that frequently our way of working with and for migrant people is based on assumptions and stereotypes that can reproduce new ways of racism and that prevents us from recognising the real necessities of people.

In our designs of intervention programs, our way of understanding social problems and our quotidian work practices with migrant people, implicit models may be found. These implicit models of intervention are the frame through which we interpret, understand and act. These implicit intervention models systematically reproduce a specific action with immigrants and their problems, and a specific vision of migrating people, their context, their resources and problems. Very often, these models are based on universalising schemes from particular concepts that exacerbate cultural differences. We should not forget that the way of framing a problem determines the way of solving it; in fact, the larger difficulty for an effective social intervention is based on a wrong framing of the problem (false, distorted, reductionist or biased view) that prevents us from finding its solution.

An intervention model is a coherent set of thoughts and concepts referring back to theories, feelings, attitudes and actions built upon the base of population categories that draw a social intervention guide in relation to specific problems. Models are, therefore, a simplified and schematic construction of reality that provide an explanation of it and create a general referential scheme that guides subsequent practice. Implicit models depend upon and are configured as a result of the interrelationship of various elements: how the situation of the problem that is expected to be solved is defined; what interests are at stake; which are the dominant values; what are the strategies that are considered more acceptable to deal with the problem; how the people involved are defined – in particular, which roles and status have they been assigned and what relationship they should have between them. These elements reflect the values, beliefs and prejudices of the professional worker; from these elements and their interrelations derive the specific nature that is established between the social agent and the immigrant 'user', as well as the specific and operational forms of that professional intervention (methodological orientation,

procedures, etc.). Professionals' awareness of the presence of these implicit models is not common, and, as a result, only explicit models are addressed in training and professional exercise. Incoherence and contradiction between the explicit and the implicit models is very frequent, since the implicit models are usually at an unconscious level.

Ethnocentric culturalism as a basic process of implicit models

The logic behind the dominant models within social intervention is a process we term 'ethnocentric culturalism'. It is a process of social construction of reality based on rigid, ethnocentric, essentialist categories imposed on migrant people. Ethnocentric culturalism comprises three elements, intimately related: imposed categorisation, ethnocentrism and culturalism.

Imposed categorisation: this is the construction of a classification system that has the power of reproducing and creating what, apparently, limits itself to description only. The way of thinking and categorising migrant people determines the intervention style. We should not forget the institutional and social worker's constructions and discourses are dominant and usually prevail over the definitions of the migrant people themselves; in this sense it has the power of normalising and naturalising arbitrary categories. There are three major common groups of metaphors to categorise migrant people: metaphors that define the migrant person as victim, metaphors that define them as a menace, and metaphors that categorise the migrant person as deprived.

1. The victim category is the one that defines those people as vulnerable, passive, defenceless, and unable to face problems and be owners of the migratory project itself.
2. The menace category emphasises the danger certain migrant people can represent for our values, our beliefs or for the welfare state. Migrant people are principally conceived of as a problem.
3. The vision of the migrant person as deprived is based on an ethnocentric vision of what we consider 'normal', being centred on the supposed cultural, social, economic, linguistic, etc., deficits of immigrants.

Categorisation implies a process of reduction of the complexity of the migrant person to one or few of their supposed characteristics. From this point of view implicit models are a device of reduction and invisibilisation of part of social reality. We often do not take into account the previous history, focusing our attention on the problems and not on the ability of people to face their difficulties; we invisibilise certain social and conjunctural factors, the multiple identities and cultural complexity of the migration process. This way the migrant person loses the possibility of self-defining themselves – the definition of their identity does not belong to them. Indifference and exclusion are subtle forms of racism, because they deny the complexity of the subject, and even deny them the consideration of it, to turn them into a mere object.

The other characteristic of the 'ethnocentric culturalism' process is that we usually apply our analytic categories to other social realities, forgetting that important differences do exist: we adapt the reality to the categories instead of adapting the categories to the reality. That is, we think the categories we use in our job are universal and can be applied in all the contexts; but this is false.

Finally, the last element of the 'ethnocentric culturalism' process is the exaggeration of the cultural factor and the essentialisation of the culture. We interpret people's behaviours

only by their belonging (real or supposed) to a certain culture, confusing social differences with cultural differences. This way the inability of the state (and lack of will) to satisfactorily solve the problems is hidden, and cultural differences are used as a front to cover the debates the society does not want to face.

This tendency is especially noticeable in the integration problem's diagnosis and analysis phase: delinquency, school failure, and poverty are explained through the cultural variables as 'religion features', 'mentality', 'orientation towards present', 'fatalism', etc. This intervention model tends to make poverty exotic, underestimates the economic and social factors and overestimates cultural factors. The diagnosis is still being framed as an exterior assessment of the interested subjects who are not consulted or included to actively take part in it. Frequently, intervention projects are formulated without taking into consideration the participation of all participants, reducing the potential effectiveness of the interventions. The immigrant is usually classified as 'good' or 'bad' depending on their more or less concordance with social rules, with the marginalisation situation perceived as maladjustment, lack of will, or deviance that has to be corrected to 'normalise' their behaviours.

Our Intercultural Social Intervention Model (ISIM)

Apart from the critical analysis of the implicit models in the professional practice, our training program applies a critical-transforming intercultural focus to social intervention, developing guidelines for the construction of an Intercultural Social Intervention Model (from this point forward 'ISIM') based on the deep comprehension of the Other, on the development of intercultural empathy, and on the acquisition of intercultural competences. Intercultural social intervention is not about including new intervention tools, but about transforming our way of thinking and living cultural diversity, including cognitive and affective factors.

We have to take into account that the majority of the professionals have been socialised within ethnocentric and monocultural backgrounds and they often do not have the tools to manage the uncertainty and the stress generated by the relationship with people whose behaviours we cannot understand or foresee. In this context, the incomprehension is double: we do not know how to interpret foreign behaviours (explicative uncertainty) and we do not get to foresee the possible reactions (predictive uncertainty). That means that, in order to work effectively in a multicultural space, good will and positive attitudes towards diversity are not enough; it is necessary to have the competences to understand diversity and manage conflicts effectively. Our values and beliefs may not be enough when we face complex and ambiguous situations. Values and beliefs must be accompanied by knowledge, skills, attitudes and dexterities that let us manage effectively conflictive and ambiguous situations. Without these competences the intercultural encounter can turn into a cultural clash that ends up creating racism and xenophobia.

The ISIM explicit model is formulated from theoretical analysis of the dominant forms of discourse and racism of the elite groups (Van Dijk 2000), including institutional racism put into practice through policies and social interventions. It has other theoretical references: in the proposals of anti-oppressive social work (initially elaborated by Bárbara B. Solomon 1976); in the concepts of empowerment and advocacy (Rose & Black 1985), and in the transformative mediation model (Bush & Folger 1994). From the model operability point of view, the more relevant theoretical-practical inspiration is the awareness or con-

sciousness raising and liberation focus that started in Latin America with Paulo Freire's work, particularly his proposal of 'problematising education' and 'dialogicity' in liberating education (1967), pedagogy of the oppressed (1970), hope pedagogy (1992) and autonomy pedagogy (1996). These proposals are also applied in the Oppressed's Theatre of Boal (1978) – in its Latin-American and European versions – as well as in different 'popular education' Latin-American programs, particularly promoted by the Latin American Council for Adult Education (CEAAL).

In our model the social worker uses strategies of empowerment to reduce, delete, fight or invert the negative valuations that, from society as a whole in general, and from power and its groups in particular, immigrants are subjected to. Utilisation and strengthening of mutual support networks; the usage of training, skills and technologies transference; training to take decisions and organise; interpreting, etc. are some examples of these strategies, where the conflict is not denied but identified and people work with it and from it when it is necessary. This model demands a compromise to keep socio-educative services and social intervention programs effectively egalitarian as well as to face negative valuations, even within technical-professional and institutional culture.

The emphasis is then on implementing dialogue, comprehension and development processes, using concepts, techniques and strategies from emancipatory and radical social work to promote the improvement and the self-determination of the participants. That is, for the development of skills that let people, organisations and communities improve by themselves by way of actions, and boost the necessary social change so that situations are more fair and equitable.

In this perspective, the social worker has a very different and diverse role: contrary to the classic role of expert manager and organiser, in our model they need to be a facilitator, a contributor, a defender, a mediator, and a trainer, depending on the dynamics generated by the intervention process. Our action is thus turned into a strengthening emancipatory pedagogic and political instrument of organisations, people and groups. The self-determination concept is a basic foundation of this model, that defines itself as a group of interrelated skills, such as: skills to identify and express necessities; establish objectives or expectations and draw up an action plan to achieve them; identify resources; make rational selections between alternative courses of action; develop appropriate attitudes to achieve the objectives; evaluate results, etc.

Social intervention is aimed at the self-determination of immigrants in multicultural contexts. It is necessary, in order to do this, to offer an intercultural training process to the professionals, to avoid social intervention turning, although involuntarily, into a reproduction of social inequalities.

Intercultural competences in ISIM

In the ISIM intervention model we propose the acquisition of a group of intercultural competences in social work, based on the contributions of Chen and Starosta (1996), Byram (1997), Aneas (2003) and Sclavi (2003). We define intercultural competences as a body of knowledge, attitudes and skills that allow the professionals to work effectively in multicultural contexts, contributing to intercultural cohabitation. It is not only about behaving in a pertinent way and adapting to different contexts, but about transforming relationships to contribute to transform the entire society.

Following Milton Bennett's proposal (1986), we can differentiate between different intercultural competences dimensions: mindset and skillset. The first one makes reference to a way of looking at the world and includes cognitive, emotional and attitudinal aspects that are transferable to all the specific competences and that we can term the intercultural mind: tolerance towards ambiguity, focus on and curiosity towards diversity, mental flexibility, creativity, among others. The second term makes reference to the behavioural aspects, specific capacities and necessary strategies to work effectively with people and groups with different cultural models. According to our model, specific competences of the professionals that work in multicultural models are: intercultural awareness; comprehension of other reference cultural frames; intercultural sensitivity; intercultural assertiveness; and creative management of conflicts.

Intercultural awareness

Paulo Freire formulated the awareness concept to describe the personal and social transformation process the oppressed people start when they become aware of the oppression logic that sustains the power relationships in which they are involved. The interesting aspect of the awareness concept is that it not only makes reference to the domination concept, but also to the oppression models that structure the oppressed's minds. We can apply this concept to relationships between people in multicultural contexts and talk about intercultural awareness as the raising of awareness of our implicit pre-assumptions, beliefs and implicit values that, often automatically, have an influence in our interpretations of the world and our behaviour(s). As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, these implicit models are often invisible barriers that prevent us from understanding other frames of reference, communicating effectively and managing conflicts and reproducing stereotypes, prejudice and unequal relations.

The awareness of the own cultural horizon in general, and of the implicit models that guide our social intervention in particular, is the first step to develop intercultural competences since this 'is our way of looking at the one that very often keeps the others in their more limited belonging, and is also our way of looking at the one that can free them' (Maalouf 1998, 7).

The comprehension of other reference frames includes the attitudes, knowledge and skills that let us understand people that do not share our same reference frame and/or situation in pluricultural contexts. It is based on the ability of researching diversity through 'dynamic maps', a group of hermeneutical keys that represent a flexible guide towards comprehension and let us change our way of identifying a problem. In this sense this is a fundamental competence in the diagnosis role of the social worker. The starting point does not only have to be the analysis of the problems, but the competences of migrating people, their networks, social and cultural capital as well as their resilience. The fundamental questions of our diagnosis should not be 'Which are the factors that determine the vulnerability of migrant people?' but 'Which are the factors that have often been determining for the success histories of these people?'. It is about revalidating resilience, the ability of facing adversity and to keep moving forward, it is about taking into consideration the previous history of migrant people, their practices, support networks, characteristics of the recipient society, environment, social climate in a certain moment, protective factors, internal resources and abilities, their opportunities and vital dynamism (Aguilar 2013).

Regarding the transnational and socio-communitarian dimension of the migrating experience, it must be emphasised that, in the majority of the cases, professional intervention of social services usually is developed from diagnosis models (characteristic of occidental clinic perspectives), that usually tend to define reality based on the characteristics of the offer, without seriously considering the communitarian exploration of potentialities and internal resources.

Intercultural sensitivity is a competence that includes emotional self-awareness, positive attitude towards diversity and intercultural empathy. For this last one we understand an empathy form that is effective in pluricultural contexts. With empathy we are seeking to understand the experience of the other person to understand within our own frame. It is a way of leaving a narcissistic vision but not an ethnocentric one. When we try to put ourselves 'in other's shoes' we are actually putting ourselves 'in our shoes'. Sclavi (2003) proposes the exotopy concept, to define the effort of recognising the autonomous perspective of the other, a perspective with its own sense, not reducible to ours. In empathy we isolate and decontextualise some features of the other's experience to understand it from our cultural frame; this way, in reality, we are not going out of ourselves, but we project our way of feeling and living an experience. Exotopy generates another way of empathy, intercultural empathy, a process in which the other person does not play a passive role, but an active one, and collaborates with us in the construction of a shared sense of affective experience. In this sense we can define 'intercultural empathy' as the skill to make experience out of aspects from reality in a different way than how it would have been done from our reference frame through the collaborative construction of the sense of affective experience.

Intercultural assertiveness is the 'skill to negotiate the cultural meanings and act communicatively in an effective way according to the multiple identities of participants' (Chen & Starosta 1996, 358). Being assertive in multicultural contexts means knowing how to identify our own communicative styles; recognise the communicative style of other people and groups; know how to create communication channels; and have the ability to conceptualise, explain oneself, present oneself in an appropriate way, reach an acceptable grade of reciprocal comprehension and manage interaction appropriately and effectively.

Finally, creative management of conflicts is the ability to use exploratory resolution strategies based on a complex analysis of conflicts, the restructuring of relationships (Bush & Folger 1994) and the generation of alternatives based on the construction of a new common reference frame (Sclavi 2003).

Pedagogical design

> Educating is not transmitting knowledge, but creating the necessary conditions for its construction.
>
> Paulo Freire

The pedagogical design of the program allows the achievement of these intercultural critical-transforming analysis and intervention abilities, through a series of innovative elements. As an example, we mention the following:

Professor and lecturer selection: more than 40 European and Latin-American professors take part in the program. All of them are internationally prestigious specialists in their respective fields and share analytical critical frames, as well as a personal commitment to

social entities and movements in the fight against the different means of discrimination in each of their countries. The profile is very interdisciplinary (social workers, sociologists, anthropologists, pedagogues, jurists, psychologists, doctors, demographers, lawyers, sociolinguists, etc.). Many of them have had training in more than one of these disciplines.

Candidate students selection: the postgraduate program is also open to degree (bachelor) students. Candidates from any country and from different professional fields with social influence can take part. This profile for selection ensures a great cultural diversity in the learning group, with interdisciplinary profiles and different perspectives and vital experiences, which are very important to ensure the success of the training program.

Selection and design of training contents: the training contents have been designed so that the students progressively acquire critical analysis ability of the reality inherent in our analytical framework, apart from increasing their self-awareness. In all the training modules cognitive and affective contents are incorporated, to achieve the acquisition of intercultural empathy from the beginning of the program. This means the contents do not superimpose or overlap themselves, but they are supported by each other, in a constructive and sequenced way. Contents are updated throughout all the courses. In the online discussion forums graduated students of the program and all the teachers take part.

Contents sequencing: in our program there are no subjects, but sequenced and successive training modules, that allow a learning building process in such a way that the students go on maturing personally as they advance in training, and go on becoming aware of their own reference frames (especially implicit). Abilities and attitudes from ISIM are also gradually acquired, especially from the third month after entry.

Theory-practice integration: all the methodological and theoretical knowledge is applied to practice. Knowledge is oriented to action. The result of the integration-application of knowledge and critical reflection for them to practice and work in the field is evaluated. All the materials and workshops incorporate cognitive and emotional elements, as a way of progressively developing intercultural empathy ability, tolerance towards ambiguity and open-mindedness towards the Other.

Study and observational analysis in empathic perspective: in the majority of the modules, critical and self-critical reality observation exercises are included. The fact that all the international students live in their own countries boosts enrichment and exchange of experiences. One of the strengths of the program is precisely this: each student has the experience of their own context, and also the direct experience of the other contexts where their colleagues live, so they can share dialogue and collaborative work in their studies and solution of practical cases.

Study and solution of cases in a cooperative way: diverse perspectives are used, such as critical incidents analysis, learning based on problems, participative auto-diagnosis, participative planning, etc. Collaborative solutions are encouraged before the realisation of the individual work and exercises.

Fieldwork: from the fourth month of training and afterwards, all the modules include practical work that the student has to do in their own context and field, with the tutorial orientation of professors. The three last months of the program are exclusively supervised practices, that are carried out in the country and region that the student decides upon, always in multicultural and complex contexts.

Conclusions

Implicit ethnocentric and culturalistic models have important consequences in social interventions with immigrants: they reproduce an unequal and asymmetric social relationship system, reinforce the image of migrant people as a 'group of social exclusion' and obstruct the autonomy and integration process. The demands of migrant people and the insufficient responses of the traditional intervention models may generate stress, uncertainty and anxiety, but are, also, an important occasion to revise our intervention methods, an opportunity to be conscious of the limitations of our analysis scheme and rethink our intervention models.

Given the unconscious character of implicit models, the development of processes to raise awareness about the existence of these models is an indispensable requirement. Professional training for social work must add these proposals. All the process is about being conscious that the categories we usually consider neutral are, often, closely related with a cultural context, and in some cases based on reductionist ethnocentric pre-assumptions. In addition, new alternative intervention models, adapted and coherent with the values, principles and compromises of social work, should be learned during training. Our ISIM intercultural social intervention model is a theoretical-practical, systematic and effective proposal for social work in contexts of cultural diversity when the goal is to achieve an actually inclusive and equalitarian citizenship. The ISIM model is critical-transforming, emancipatory, and empowering, it supports and stimulates individuals and groups to develop their skills to solve their problems and take decisions, and this model at the same time advocates for a structural change towards a fairer society. At an individual level, results include control of the situation, sociability and behaviours aimed at action. In organisations, results include the development of organisational networks, fundraising and policy re-definition. In the community, results are the creation of social inclusion projects, pluralist cohabitation and construction of collective projects of environment and life quality improvement.

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