

# Best Practice Models in the Development and Implementation of Intercultural Curriculum

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## **Abstract:**

This study represents a product of the research project “Development directions of the intercultural curriculum, regarding the European dimension of education”, carried out as part of the POSDRU project 159/1.5/S/136077 “Romanian culture and European cultural models: research, timing, durability”, whose beneficiary is the Romanian Academy. The article approaches the theoretical and methodological perspectives of the intercultural curriculum issue, analyses educational practices of curricular development and deployment of some intercultural education programs. Elaborated in order to sync the curricula with the intercultural values as part of the European area, the article is based on models of curricular planning and development that have proved their efficiency regarding the European curriculum and case studies with respect to intercultural education as part of the French educational system. To this effect, there is an emphasis on elements that can be capitalized in building the Romanian curricula and generate good educational practices in the field.

**Keywords:** intercultural education, intercultural curriculum, intercultural skills, intercultural school, curricular models of the intercultural education.

## **1. Conceptual approaches and perspectives of the European interculturalism**

Ensuring a rational and didactic character in elaborating and deploying the intercultural education programs represent a basic condition in order to accomplish the purposes of interculturalism and manifestation of trainers' creativity, as part of the multicultural society's diverse educational field. As far as the intercultural school is concerned, the educational models of interculturalism and the good practices in deploying the intercultural curriculum represent major topics in teacher's training.

The intercultural curriculum is represented “by all educational documents, projects and programs that aim the development of individuals’ intercultural competences and life skills, as part of the multicultural society.” (Bunăiașu, 2015, 45). Built, developed and optimized in order to train intercultural skills, the curriculum is being resized in accordance with multiple elements:

- the principles and values of interculturalism, with respect to the international and European agenda but also to the specific multicultural context;
- elements of politics, integrated as part of the social and cultural models in order to train the intercultural awareness, by applying the strategies of international and European institutions, of those governmental;
- the European and national educational policies, when it comes to promoting the intercultural dialogue and education as part of the school;
- the intercultural school's characteristics;
- the good educational practices in planning and deploying programs of intercultural education;
- capitalizing the significant results of intercultural education processes: acculturation, cultural absorption, networking, intercultural learning.

The curricular models of interculturalism represent theoretical, methodological and instrumental referentials, which explicitly provide approach perspectives and operational methodologies, as part of the intercultural education, focusing on the formal context where training programs of the intercultural skills deploy, by applying intercultural learning strategies. These models are based on the values and characteristics of the intercultural school (Nedelcu, 2003, 30-31):

- encouraging pupils' potential, by providing equal opportunities in order to learn and practice communication and showing respect;
- underlying activities and interactions specific to the multicultural school on values of the diversity culture and equal opportunities;
- adequate management by didactic staff of the cultural differences between pupils and intercultural dialogue;
- capitalizing pupils' cultural resources and learning styles, in elaborating and deploying curricular and extra-curricular programs;
- developing curriculum's intercultural dimension, as far as both of explicit and hidden curriculums are concerned;
- the institutional structure on multi-cultural classes and encouragement of each pupil's participation at school activities.

The European educational policies nominate the list of abilities and skills specific to the general purposes of intercultural education as part of the permanent education (Kerzil & Vinsonneau, 2004, apud Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, 2007, *Approches interculturelles en éducation*, 26):

- critical analysis of the tense situations and coming up with a solution to this effect;
- accepting and comprehending the perspectives of different cultures;
- adequate networking as part of interaction situations with persons belonging to other cultures, whether being immigrants or residents;
- acknowledging and respecting the cultural identity of other cultures;
- comprehending traditions and values of ethnic groups;

- getting familiar to migration processes, cultural contexts and expression ways of feelings as part of different cultures;
- manifesting intercultural attitudes and values as far as knowledge and actions are concerned: empathy, cohesion, intercultural respect, power of dealing with racism, xenophobia and intolerance, opposition against radical nationalism.

An active role in promoting intercultural education is applied by the European Council and European Commission, which guide the process in order to absorb intercultural values as part of the educational institutional systems and the curricular of member states through educational policies and strategies.

As part of the European Council document “*Livre blanc sur le dialogue interculturel*” (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008) there are mentioned some strategic directions and frameworks of the intercultural training and learning, all over Europe, as far as primary, secondary and University education (op cit, 33-34):

a) Primary and secondary education:

- school activities will equally encourage the development of intellectual abilities and skills, as well as pupils' personal development, so that “school become important vectors in training pupils for their active citizenship life” (*Livre blanc sur le dialogue interculturel*, 33), with attitudes of cultural opening and intercultural communication skills;
- all school disciplines have to include an intercultural dimension;
- History, foreign languages and religious education represent priority fields of the school curriculum, where an important redesign is taking place, in order to promote interculturalism.

b) Superior education:

- developing the intercultural dialogue has to be well represented as part of the academic programs;
- training “intercultural intellectuals”, persons with intercultural conscience and expertise, represents a component of the Universities' mission.

The perspectives of intercultural learning are mentioned as part of European documents and are flexibly approached in accordance with social needs and characteristics of the national curricula of member states (Eurydice, 2004, 57):

- intercultural learning in order to emphasize respect and tolerance between pupils, regarding the countries where social needs and intercultural education are based on fighting against racism and xenophobia;
- European curricular approach, based on developing the feeling of European identity, by acquiring knowledge about Europe's culture and history and methodologies in order to be aware of the place and role of their own country as part of Europe;

- the international curricular approach, based on contemporary world issue, relations between states, migration phenomenon and methodologies in order to facilitate the comprehension of cultural diversity.

Beside the explicit intercultural learning psychopedagogically assisted as part of the formal curriculum, an important role is assigned through the above mentioned document to non-governmental organizations, civil society, mass-media. By means of the nonformal curriculum, there can be accomplished volunteering educational services based on facilitating immigrants' cultural absorption, as well as on developing active citizenship as part of the society open to showing respect to human rights, which approach the cultural differences as wealth and sustainable development opportunity.

## 2. General curricular models of the intercultural education

The intercultural education's general curricular models explain the curricular vision and nominate methodologies in order to redesign the curricula, from the perspective of accomplishing the intercultural purposes as part of the educational system. These models are based on the sources of intercultural education's general purposes, on social and curricular characteristics and emphasize several major orientations to which member states adhere. From the curriculum based on knowledge about cultural alterity to the curriculum based on developing pupils' social skills, by favouring intercultural learning experiences, the curricular models are grouped in several categories (Banks, J.A., Banks, C., 1997, Rulcker, 1992, Wakling, 1980, Jeffcoate, 1976, apud Nedelcu, 2008, 106-109):

- *"the curricular redesign model*, with multiple approaches: the model of cultural contributions, the cumulative/additive model, the transformationalist model, the decisional and social action model;
- *the social model of consolidating the power of minority groups*;
- *the living experiences program"*.

*The curricular redesign model* promotes the integration into curriculum of the cultural groups' axiologic references and the approach of intercultural learning contents, by activating pupils in order to determine and analyze them. The four application versions correspond to the intensity to which the intercultural paradigm underlie the curriculum: from introducing topics that approach cultural traditions, heroes, events, experiences of different cultural groups to converting the curriculum, supported by the paradigm of collaborative and experiential learning, as part of the cultural diversity context. The transformationalist model marks the curricular reform, from the perspective of intercultural education purposes. This model supposes rethinking the curriculum from another perspective optics, the one of consistent introduction, of comprehending and capitalizing the values of cultural groups and collaborative learning. The model is preponderantly applied as part of the

curricula of United States of America, Great Britain, Western Europe and Australia. The version of decisional and social action curricular model supposes a more pronounced activation of pupils, in order to generate networking situations and intercultural communication, of learning through action, of accomplishing projects as part of multi-cultural groups. The last above mentioned model is successfully applied as part of Nordic countries, France, Germany, where educational systems are focused on communitary educational programs.

*The social model of consolidating the power of minority groups*, capitalizes the intercultural schools' development, by building and deploying the curricula in accordance with possibilities in order to capitalize cultural and intercultural experiences of individuals and ethnic groups. The model is notably applied as part of the educational system of Holland and Belgium.

*The living experiences program* promotes the development of social programs, in which pupils belonging to different cultural backgrounds are involved. Tobias Rulker, the initiator of this model, suggests several general topics in order to analyze the programs of intercultural education (Rulker, 1992, apud Nedelcu, 2008, 109):

- “Where do immigrants come from, what projects do they have for themselves and their children?
- What is the difference between social skills of different ethnic groups?
- Where are cultural exchanges between different ethnic groups taking place?”

The studies regarding the intercultural curriculum in Romania and the preliminary results of the project “Development directions of the intercultural curriculum in România, from the perspective of European education dimension” reveals the following characteristics, trends and development directions:

- the curricular reforms in 1998 and 2011 underline significant evolutions in curricula's intercultural openness, with records in: defining educational finalities and learning units, based on intercultural principles and values; introducing educational disciplines dedicated to ethnic groups in Romania; enlarging the subject area of intercultural education as part of the curricular area Advisory and guidance;
- analysis of the curricular programs and educational practices especially reveal the application of the cultural contributions model and the cumulative one;
- audit of the intercultural curriculum in Romania, accomplished as part of the above mentioned project, reveals the adhesion of the didactic staff to educational principles and strategies of the intercultural school, as well as their training needs as far as the intercultural education field is regarded.

- in order to sync with the European perspectives in the field and the models that suppose paradigm shifts and curriculum's transformation, there is a necessity regarding the curricular reorganization as far as programs and handbooks are concerned, but also as far as the level of applying intercultural learning strategies is regarded.

### **3. Models of good curricular practices as part of the French intercultural education**

In France, the principles and values of interculturalism are highlighted in all environments (social, economic, cultural, educational) and the ways of realizing the intercultural relationships and dialogue have stability and consistency, joining the social environment of a community with a pronounced multicultural character. The intercultural education in France is founded on the values of a western civilization, on the traditions of umanist education system, on governmental and educational policies which firstly promotes the fundamental rights and liberties of mankind. During the mobility stage at the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 I had the chance to study the specifics of the intercultural education in France and I analyzed the record of the former statements through documentary studies, participative observations, interviews and study cases. At the moment, the model of the intercultural school from France records the role of education in the crystallization of the principles and values in the european conscience and the legislative system with the educational models promote the most advanced forms of interculturalism. From this perspective, the history of the French educational system changed into the educational paradigm in France. From knowing the school as a primordial factor of identity of the republican nationalism to the approach into progressive measures (starting with the '70) of building the intercultural school and maximizing the role of education in the social and economical cohesion.

In this direction, in the French educational system were applied progressively all forms of interculturality, from the most “implied to the engaged interculturality, from the merging interculturality to the experimented one, criticizing, dynamic, creative” (Defays, 2014, 154-160). All these directions are represented in the educational curricula, elaborated and applied in the spirit of integrative paradigm; which highlights the acquirement of multicultural knowledge and also the development of competencies and social abilities of scholars, through enforcing intercultural experiences and exercising the capacities of intercultural learning. Even a basic analysis on the programmes and textbooks from the national curricula of France, highlights these meanings of interculturalism; we find these meanings of the curricula, from objectives, themes, learning activities, focused upon scholars understanding interculturalism, in intercultural dialogue and in manifestation of an adequate behavior to multicultural society, as far as illustrations and implied and hidden curricula. The intercultural ports of the educational system in

France, restructuring and developing the curricula, from the perspective of interculturalism, are chronologically marked from the next steps, which they correspond to legislative measures and educational projects of impact (apud Meunier, 2008, 231-259):

- organizing courses in mother tongue of thoroughgoing study of origin culture (*Les enseignements de langue et de culture d'origine - ELCO*), set under rights by the Circular from 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1975.
- establishing trial classes of integration in the educational environment of immigrant scholars (*Les classes d'intégration - CLIN, d'adaptation - CLAD et les cours de rattrapage intégré -CRI*), starting with the '70s, last century.
- organizing educational institutional projects (*Les projets d'action éducative - PAE*), based on cultural policies.
- Forming intercultural education for all the scholar population in France and the ELCO expansion, through Circular of January 25<sup>th</sup> 1978.
- The opening of schools for external partnerships, starting officially in 1980, which befriended transfers of intercultural practices in the learning system.
- The ZEP Intercultural model - *Les zones d'éducation prioritaire* (1981), which purpose is to integrate the scholar culture in the policy and school curricula and approaching multiculturalism as a source of developing the national culture.
- Initiating the national curricula changes in the way of substantiation based on the the principle of education for “the multitude of world’s civilizations”, through the Report of Jacques Berque, in 1985.
- applying territorial policies that develop solidarity, through the local educational contract model (*Le modèle du Contrat éducatif local –CEL*), enforced in the National Education Reform in 1998;
- Intercultural education in the new educational approaches, highlighted after the '90s, through which every curricular discipline has intercultural ports. Every educational programme or extracurricular activity follows objectives of intercultural education.

Within the dispute context from France, based on the college reform, both the National Education Ministry, of the Superior Education and Research, through the curricular project exposed to public dispute, and the opposing entity of this project, bring arguments regarding options of powerful support to the intercultural educational values. An example in this way is public dispute regarding languages and classic culture; through curricula reform project, these are no longer represented through different disciplines, but through interdisciplinary modules, based educating scholars in the spirit of humanist values of Antiquity, rather than academical knowledge. This example shows that intercultural opening, important to the French curriculum (in all of its forms and through all disciplines or interdisciplinary modules) and the

minimization of the ethnocentrism is not producing ideological disputes, but sometimes different curricular options which all head to support a consistent intercultural base.

To highlight the best educational practices from the French educational system, we will present three particular cases, taking advantage of the documentary resources of a study from the National Institute of Pedagogical Research (Lorcerie, coord, 2003): a primary school, an educational project and an experiment from behalf of the local administration, with good effects in integration and intercultural education of scholars with risk of social exclusion.

In superior education, highschool and colleges, intercultural practices have already a tradition, are highlighted through simple observations respecting institutional and curricular observations (curricular offer with a large intercultural opening, instruction strategies focused upon developing intercultural competencies, extracurricular programmes of cultural partnership); these cases invoked from the '90s, point out examples of manifesting an intercultural conscience of the professors and decision factors, which justify good results, sometimes in situations less favorable.

There are cases of solving social problems and of education in the spirit of interculturalism, in far less favorable conditions, solved with success 20 years ago; which also explains the maturity of approaching and manifesting intercultural relationships in the society and in the nowadays French education system.

a) *Anatole-France primary school from Vaulx-en-Verin* is located in a far less favorable environment for education infrastructure from big cities and doesn't have a close social center, which maintained some cultural stereotypes that scholars assimilated from their families, a specific phenomena across the tracks. To counter this lacks and to assure equal conditions of instruction and intercultural education for scholars of this school, the teaching body adopted fundamental principles of collaborative pedagogy, as an educational philosophy, which were transposed in educational practices over the ethnocentrism. The particular educational practices of this school are (Alarmatine, 2003, 273-282):

- preparing daily activities, in special places ("lieux de parole"), through choosing some free activities by the scholars, options focused the activity content and having free discussions between them;
- organizing interactive activities, of development of imagination and critical thinking of scholars, through lessons based on giving advices and manifestation of collective gestures;
- organizing lessons in teams of teachers, activities of mutual learning, in multicultural groups (workshops, projects, support groups);
- focus on co-evaluation, in checking and appreciating the results of the scholars.

b) *Chemin d'identité Project* (Berrou, 2003, 287-293), developed from 1994 till 1996 represents a series of activities in which some college scholars were involved, which parents come from mediterranean zone (Portugal, Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria, Maroc). More steps were followed: description of the family, till the second generation; realizing an exposition with handmade works; publishing the stories and organizing a celebrating event, in which the parents of scholars also participated along with teachers, personalities, representatives of the National Educational Ministry, interactions between families coming from different cultural environments and also intercultural exchanges. The impact of the projects consisted of understanding and appreciating the editing and publishing of texts and also focusing on work responsibility, understanding cultural identities and valuing them to support the genesis of engaged citizenship into respecting the rights of the human and cultural differences.

c) *"Bussing" operation at Bergerac* (apud Alarmantine, 2003, 299-307) represents an organizing experience of the city in 1996, consisting in closing a district school, where most of the scholars came from families of immigrants from Northern Africa and had problems socially integrating and adapting, with negative effects on the behavior and educational results. The scholars were distributed to eight schools, and got transportation assured along with equal chances of instruction and education, as the other scholars from Bergerac. Even if the initiative was heavily criticized and even today arises problems regarding the right to close a school reasoned by fighting segregation, the conditions from that period and the registered progress of the transferred scholars, analyzed by the specialists, teachers and parents, defend the administration's initiative. In nowadays conditions of France, the situation of children of foreign origin in the unprivileged districts from Bergerac passes from the picture, but the organizing measure evoked points out the efforts of all educational factors for fighting against discrimination, social segregation and forming the future French citizens, with European conscience.

#### **4. Premises and intercultural development options of the national curriculum**

The curriculum patterns described and the educational practices analysed will be merged with the results resulting from the analysis of the context and the audit of the intercultural field in Romania, in order to choose the appropriate alternatives used to recreate the national curriculum, in terms of interculturality. In addition to this, the development options will be integrated in the comprehensive philosophy of the postmodern curriculum (Potolea, 2002) and the methodological concept of the transformational curricular model and that of social acting and decision making (Banks, J.A., Banks, C., 1997).

To this purpose, we intend to stress on the primary results of this research project and propose some development methods of the theoretical

corpus and the research tools, as a result of the knowledge and good case practice transfer during the mobility internship from the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3:

- the development of the theoretic framework of the intercultural curriculum according to the political philosophy of education (Pinchard, 2009), very important in the development of the intercultural education ideological framework and also in supporting the changes from the national curriculum;
- perfecting the methodological model of the intercultural curriculum and developing the educational program *Social relationships in the multicultural society*, which are tested during the project, through the integration of successful methods in the curriculum and in the non-scholar educational programs in France;
- developing a series of teaching milestones regarding: a) developing students' imagination and creativity, in the context of cultural diversity, in terms of exploiting the prospects of dynamic imaginary creation ((Wunenburger, 2013, Bușe, 2013); b) stressing on the ethical side of education in the development of the citizen in the postmodern society (Kerlan, 2007); c) applying pedagogical principles in emotional teaching, during intercultural education (Badescu, 2014);
- identifying psycho-pedagogical milestones aiming to transfer positive attitudes and good intercultural practices of the family, through school-family themed partnerships; to this purpose, we propose that the development set of directions of interculturalism in Romania should include some measures of parents' education in terms of interculturality and also including the family in the promotion of intercultural education. The issue of interculturality brings both new arguments and solutions for streamlining the educational function of the family, in the context of the debates related to the family as space of social creation and the relationship between the traditional and the modern family (Pierron, 2014).

Together with these intercultural horizons, it is necessary to develop a national strategy for the development of teaching skills, mandatory for teaching multicultural classes, by increasing the share of intercultural education in the training program, and involving the teachers in mobility internships in multicultural schools, which already have a reputation in the field and great results. During the training program, we appreciate the emphasis on a series of issues of the curriculum and intercultural communication, among which: a) "Designing and managing the scholar curriculum", with exercising related to the intercultural dimension (Bunaiasu, 2011); b) Models of institutional intercultural development of the curriculum, with results on the schools' management (Bunăiașu, Strungă, 2012); c) "Europe, a laboratory of intercultural communication: (Georgiu, 2010,153-170); d) Strategies and

techniques for communication optimization / prevention of the communication difficulties (Smarandache, Vlăduțescu, Tenescu, 2014, Calin, 2010).

This impact analysis of these directions of developing a theoretical-methodological frame of the intercultural curriculum will be the source of reflections and following empirical researches, so that we determinate a feasible frame of curricular development, through synchronization with European models and adjustment at the specific of the multiculturalism of Romania.

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