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PERSPECTIVES AND MODALITIES IN ORDER TO DEVELOP THE DIDACTIC STAFF'S INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyse the impact of some perspectives, strategies, and programs, in order to develop the intercultural dimension of the professional competence profile, regarding the teaching career. The investigation tools are represented by the questionnaire and the focus group, applied to a sample of 110 subjects. The results of the research emphasize: a) the social and educational necessity in order to train the didactic staff's intercultural competence; b) the subjects 'options for programs of intercultural psychology, intercultural communication, the didactic methodology of the intercultural education; c) the subjects' adhesion to creating a European curricular framework, in order to acclimatize the teachers to an intercultural environment. The results achieved emphasize the idea of adopting the transformational curricular model as part of the intercultural curricula, in order to train the teachers and to synchronize specific strategies as part of European countries.

Keywords: intercultural education, cultural diversity, European conscience, didactic staff's intercultural competences, intercultural curriculum

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1 CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES

At present, intercultural education is viewed not only as a dimension of "new education", but as a socio-educational paradigm that integrates multidisciplinary contributions and an interdisciplinary methodology to promote the values of a multicultural environment, desirable in the European multicultural society. From this perspective, specialized literature (focused on strengthening the epistemological status of intercultural education) and research regarding social sciences have revealed relevant and effective strategies and programs to develop intercultural skills, as key elements of the "European conscience".

The analysis of the conceptualization perspectives reveals a postmodern pedagogy option for a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to intercultural education, in the spirit of the cultural diversity educational paradigm. The comprehensiveness attribute is given by the axiological nucleus of intercultural education, whose general objectives are defined in the European documents on two axes:

- affirmation of the values of cultural diversity in multicultural societies;
- development of intercultural competencies in lifelong learning, highlighted by stating the social performance, in the context of cultural diversity and the internalization of the mental model of European citizenship.

In a broad sense, intercultural competences represent an operationalizable and transferable set of knowledge, skills, attitudes that highlight the processes of cultural enrichment (acculturation, cultural integration, socialization), which increases the efficiency of the intercultural communication mechanisms and facilitates socio-cultural affirmation. The intercultural competencies detail several key areas of competences of the European Commission: communication skills in foreign languages; social and civic competencies; competence of learning to learn; cultural awareness and expression skills.

By systematizing and reunification of the economic and humanistic approaches, Barmeyer and Devoine (2012) had promoted a structural model of intercultural competence, whose key elements are revealed on three levels:

A. affective plan: empathic abilities and skills, openness of spirit, not judging attitude, tolerance to ambiguity and frustration, polycentric approach;
B. cognitive dimension: knowing and understanding the socio-cultural systems, knowledge of foreign languages;

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C. the behavior plan: the ability to apply and transfer knowledge about cultural otherness, skills to communicate, the ability for applying the linguistic knowledge in contexts of cultural diversity, the ability of metacommunication, flexibility behavior, self-discipline (Barmeyer & Devoine, 2012).

The EU documents are specified components of intercultural competences, which are objectives of intercultural education in school curricula (Kerzil &Vinseneau, 2004):

- knowledge and respect for cultural identity elements of other societies or cultural groups;
- acceptance and understanding of cultural groups references;
- critical approach to problematic culture situations and taking culture of prevention and solving;
- proper manifestation in situations of interaction with representatives of other cultures;
- understanding the values and customs of ethnic groups;
- to familiarize with the phenomenon and migration processes and means of expressing feelings in many cultures;
- Express the values of multiculturalism in social cognition and actions: the manifestation of opposition to racism, xenophobia, intolerance and radical nationalism, intercultural empathy, solidarity, intercultural respect (Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, 2007, Approches interculturelles en education, apud Bunăiaşu, 2015 a).

The Council of Europe and the European Commission promote several categories of programs and projects on cultural diversity and intercultural skill development (Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, 2007, Meunier, 2008):

- projects of assimilation for immigrant students whose cultural references are not integrated into the school curriculum of the host country;
- integrative projects centered on promoting intercultural dialogue, on optimizing cultural interactions and the manifestation of cooperation between cultures;
- humanities projects, based on the affirmation of active citizenship in multicultural European society.

By reporting from these premises of intercultural skills domain it is revealed the necessity and the legitimacy of researchers on intercultural profile of the teacher. First, a well-defined profile from this perspective represents the sine qua non of

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achieving the objectives of intercultural education. Secondly, the shaping of some European educational strategies of intercultural training of teachers ensure the unity and consistency of professional training in Europe. There are still gaps in terms of intercultural training of teachers in the European Union between Western countries with a long tradition of intercultural practices and with consistent elements of training curricula and other countries. For example, the case of Romania where pedagogical training curriculum needs to be reviewed in this issue. Another argument that concerns the situation the magnification of the migration phenomenon as part of Europe and the complexity of the problems as part of the intercultural school.

The intercultural competencies of teachers are integrated into the category of transverse ones and details the structural elements of the model of intercultural competence, within the meaning of exercising of specific professional roles and personal development of intercultural school under the virtue of multicultural values. Key elements of intercultural competence for the teaching profession are:

- extensive knowledge of the cultural values of communities and cultural groups from which students come;
- proper understanding of cultural alterity, which marks axiological references of students;
- abilities, skills and specific strategies of applying multicultural processes, adapted to the student / cultural groups and socio-cultural context and the school;
- skills and abilities to streamline and facilitate intercultural communication;
- management of problematic situations and promoting intercultural relations adequate to classroom;
- development capabilities of synergy of multicultural group;
- implementation of educational strategies of inoculating multicultural values in the consciousness of students and motivating students in asserting intellectual and social performance in the context of cultural diversity;
- empathic abilities and attitudes to issues of cultural openness of the students.

By relation to the process of integrating these elements in the teacher's competence profile, brings in rigorous foundation of intercultural training curricula, continuing education and high level of complexity of perspectives and strategies adopted in this regard. for this purpose, we intend to engage in a series of empirical and experimental research. The general hypothesis of this research supports the

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premise that developing a benchmark methodology for intercultural training, supported by theoretical, instrumental, and both direct and indirect adhesion beneficiaries can facilitate the development of programs (European, national and regional) for the development of intercultural competences of teachers.

The approach that we present is initially in the process of shaping the premises issue and achieve a study of impact. The study's purpose consists of the initial evaluation of the impact of some concepts, strategies and ways of developing intercultural skills of teachers, by reference to the subject's views. Depending on the results of the impact study, we foreshadowed following investigative steps, on a greater scale. Relevant information will be correlated with other research results in the field, and the data's reliability will be tested in a future micro-research, where we will apply the same tools, improved. In this respect, we intend to emphasize the methodological character of micro-research, of validation of an assessment tool of direction impact and development strategies of intercultural skills.

2 PURPOSE OF STUDY AND OBJECTIVES

Empirical micro-research hypothesis is one of the particular ones of the general hypothesis stated. It refers to the following assumption:

If the perspectives and the proposed methods of development of intercultural competences have supportive elements theoretical, flexibility and operationality, they can be appreciated and assumed by the subjects. The criteria for these items were used in validating the strategies presented to subjects.

Impact study objectives are:

1. Testing subjects' perceptions and opinions regarding the perspectives of theoretical and methodological intercultural training of teachers.

2. The systematization of relevant data in a list of directions for development of intercultural competencies of teachers.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The impact study involved subjects who were selected through the sampling methodology mixed with stratified randomization technique sampling. these variables were applied for reasons of relevance for the type of categories of subjects and research objectives, and to ensure the representativeness. These variables are: the specialty of teachers and teaching degree in pre- university education; expertise of

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academic staff in the social sciences; age and sex, according to the principle of ensuring equal opportunities in the selection of subjects and to ensure representativeness at this level (to reflect the statistical report of the target group); stage of professionalization didactical and intercultural formation level, to correlate opinions of subjects in two stages of psycho-pedagogical training (initial and continuous) with diverse learning experiences and intercultural management training programs. By these ways, in Romania the batch of 110 subjects selected from South-West of Oltenia has the following composition: 40 teachers in pre- university education; 25 social sciences experts (academic teaching staff with expertise in Educational Sciences, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, Theology); 20 formers (teachers empowered to conduct professional training); 25 students enrolled in science education specializations.

3.2. Instrument

The basic tool used was the opinion questionnaire administered face-to-face and online and constructed with reference to the criteria of operationalization of micro-research empirical hypothesis. The questionnaire is divided into three categories of items: a) perceptions and conceptions on intercultural education, intercultural competences and intercultural training of teachers (items 3-10); b) directions and strategies for rethinking the curriculum of teacher's education in terms of intercultural dimension (items 11-16); c) methodological issues concerning intercultural training programs for teachers (items 18-22); d) the expected impact of development strategies and the intercultural skills of teachers (items 23-24). The data were nuanced by organizing two focus group meetings, attended by representatives from each subject category.

The independent variables of the impact study are represented by perspectives, strategies and programs invoked of development of intercultural competencies of teachers. This led to the expectation of the dependent variable, which refers to the adhesion of subjects at the relevant directions, at the operational strategies and the affirmation of personal beliefs in the field. Regarding intermediate variables, we pointed out the subjects' intercultural experiences, socio-cultural and didactical. The high degree or low of this experiences was put in correlation with the subjects choice to determine their relevance and usefulness of the data in support of further empirical research and experimental.

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4 RESULTS

Relevant responses of the subjects were grouped on criteria that operationalize the hypotheses of micro-researches and reveals the impact of invoked variables of developing of intercultural competencies of teachers. Data presentation was focused on: a) variable appreciated "mostly" and "very much" or marked with the values 1, 2 (positive feedback); b) variables assessed "very little" and "not at all" or marked by the values of 4.5 (negative feedback); c) relevant views and opinions presented at items with open answers.

Results of micro-research useful in supporting subsequent investigations in this matter were systematized by cumulating those situated on the steps of intensity "substantially" and "very much" or those quantified by the values 1 and 2):

Perceptions and beliefs concerning intercultural education, intercultural competences and intercultural training of teachers:

The approach of the intercultural education in the spirit of education paradigm for cultural diversity (Abdallah-Pretceille, M., 2013, Charitonidou, 2012, pp.112-122);

European conscience and citizenship valuing active as desiderates of education in the spirit of interculturalism;

The approach of the educational logic centered on competencies and of multidimensional models in the conceptualization and development of methodologies in intercultural competences domain (Barmeyer & Devoine, 2012, 65, Kerzil &Vinseneau, 2004).

Table 1. Conception concerning the premises of teachers developing intercultural skills

Groups	Criterion no. 1	Criterion no. 2	Criterion no. 3
Pre-University didactic staff	55%	72,50%	52,50%
Experts	80%	84%	76%
Trainers	75%	80%	70%

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Students	52%	76%	52%

- Directions and strategies for rethinking the curriculum of teacher training in intercultural perspective:
  the usage of transformativist model in rethinking and building intercultural teacher training curriculum (Banks, 1997, Nedelcu, 2008):
  1) Introducing curriculum structures centered on interculturalism, in the subjetcs of pedagogical preparation and didactical
  2) The introduction od the intercultural education discipline, in the program of pedagogical initial preparation and in programs/ modules of continue formation of teachers.
     organizing teaching practice and mobility in schools with good practices in the field of interculturalism.

Table 2. Methodological reviews regarding directions and strategies of rethinking the curricula of teacher's training.

Groups	Criterion no. 1	Criterion no. 2	Criterion no. 3	Criterion no. 4
Pre-University didactic staff	42,50%	67,50%	77,50%	82,50%
Experts	68%	72%	84%	88%
Trainers	65%	65%	85%	85%
Students	48%	60%	80%	76%

- Methodological aspects concerning intercultural training programs for teachers:
  1) the methodical approach of the interculturalism processes inthe training programs (processes of acculturation, enculturation, cultural integration) (Gavreliuc, 2011);
  2) the usage of constructivist instructional strategies (Joița, 2006, Wilson, B.G. & Lowry, M., 2000);

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familiarization with the strategies and methodologies that facilitate interactions in multicultural groups and with meta-communication strategies and of optimization of communication (Smarandache, Vlăduțescu & Țenescu, 2014, Călin, 2010);

3) valorisation of elements of emotional learning pedagogy (Bădescu, 2014, Goleman, 2001);
4) the usage od virtual innovative strategies specific to virtual communities of teaching in adult education (Bunăiașu, Vlăduțescu & Strungă, 2014, Strungă, 2014).

Table 3. Methodological reviews concerning intercultural trainings programs for teachers

Groups	Criterion no. 1	Criterion no. 2	Criterion no. 3	Criterion no. 4	Criterion no. 5
Pre-University didactic staff	67,50%	52,50%	77,50%	62,50%	72,50 %
Experts	72%	64%	88%	72%	84%
Trainers	65%	55%	85%	70%	75%
Students	64%	52%	76%	68%	80%

The expected impact of development strategies and programs of intercultural competencies of teachers:

- the development of teachers skills, the trandisciplinary approach of interculturality (Bunăiașu, 2015 c);
- obtaining higher professional performance in terms of intercultural educational practices;
- optimizing intercultural learning for students;

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- involvement of teachers in intercultural projects at European level, national and regional.

Table 4. Considerations Regarding the expected impact of the development process of intercultural competences of teachers

Groups	Criterion no. 1	Criterion no. 2	Criterion no. 3	Criterion no. 4
Pre-University didactic staff	52,50%	72,50%	70%	77,50%
Experts	64%	76%	72%	64%
Trainers	60%	75%	75%	70%
Students	56%	64%	68%	68%

5 DISCUSSION

Comparative analysis of the responses, the categories of subjects indicates significant differences in criteria for: paradigms and models of intercultural education and intercultural competences (criteria Nos. 1 and No. 3, from the first variable, valuing transformaționalist model of intercultural curriculum in teacher's Education (criterion No. 1. the second variable). In these cases the experts and trainers appreciated the greater educational paradigms and models that are based on intercultural competence development strategies. These differences put them in connection with specialized high level of culture and methodological experiences of these subjects. On the other variables, however, referring to concrete development strategies and ways of intercultural and their impacts we have not registered substantial differences.

Processing of the data revealed a high degree for subjective appreciation of of methodological choices postmodern intercultural training of teachers. On the other hand, it revealed and the necessity of the development of culture issues, for teachers and undergraduate students. Overall, we consider micro-reaserches empirical confirmation of the hypothesis, meaning that the outlook and the proposed arrangements, obtained adhesion subjects through their premises, by flexibility and great operation.

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6 CONCLUSIONS

The final results of the impact study confirmed through retest will be made in correlation with the partial results of ongoing research on the topic of European Curriculum (Bunăiaşu, 2013). In this way, we consider the possible outline of a curriculum framework of intercultural training of teachers, with operational guidance and flexible elements so as to be applied within different cultural and educational context. This objective corresponds to European trends and developments in the field of intercultural education, the European model of intercultural school and takes into account the compatibility of intercultural curriculum models and programs for initial and continuous training of teachers in Europe. Registration issues in this direction, synchronization patterns European education is a premise for a higher impact in shaping the strategies promoted intercultural profile of teachers.

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