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Intercultural Competence as a Component of the Teachers' Competence Profile

Rodica Mariana NICULESCU[1], Marius BAZGAN[2]

Abstract: The intercultural dimension of the human of the third millennium is determined by multiculturalism and has become a necessity in terms of a new attitude towards the others belonging to the worldwide and coming closer and closer to each individual. This dimension is most necessary in the case of teachers of nowadays who have the responsible mission to form personalities for the future. This paper work presents a synthesis of the theoretical fundaments of a complex research centered on intercultural education (IE) on academic level, followed by a brief presentation of an ameliorative research as one of the sequences of the investigative approach. Based on a previously ascertaining research done, this sequence involved the design and the implementation of a curriculum explicitly aiming to develop the components of the intercultural competence (IC). It represents the independent variable that is assumed as being a possible responsible of an obvious development of the intercultural competence for the selected experimental group, compared to a control group. The research design follows the necessary steps and the results are processed statistically and interpreted in the light of the fundamental theory and of a direct observation in the educational field.

Keywords: Competence profile, intercultural competence, intercultural education;

1. Teachers' Competence Profile

A core competence profile with a worldwide dimension seems to become a necessary focus of contemporary research in the field of teachers' training issue. This necessity comes first from the unprecedented mobility of teachers and students across borders; this mobility places face to face teachers and students belonging to different cultures, with diverse backgrounds and nuanced expectations from each other. A core competence profile of teachers may ensure the bases of the expected efficiency in their professional activity, no matter where they are supposed to teach.

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1.1. General Issues

Each teacher is initially trained within a national context and the development of each teacher's personality is the result of an enculturation process with very clear specificities.

Speaking about enculturation it implies a kind of isolation inside a specific culture which is not an appropriate hypostasis of man's life in the third millennium for two main reasons: first, nowadays, each culture is a result of a connection of different social groups of interchanges; thus, the idea of interculturality is a reality (Alsina, 2000). One can talk in this context that even the enculturation process involves a specific intercultural learning process with a cognitive and an emotional component (Hinzen, 2005, pp. 21-22).

Enculturation as a term has been introduced by Melville J. Herskovits in 1948. It expresses an ongoing process that puts the individual in the situation of learning step by step the values, the rules, and the requirements of the culture in which the person was born, educated, and grew up in. Generally speaking, this term is used for expressing the process by which culture is passed on from one generation to the next. In this sense, enculturation is synonymous with socialization (Follo, 2010).

This process involves both assimilation and adaptation: assimilation of cultural values within the individuals' lives, and the humans' adaptation to the culture they belong to. The literature speaks about an adopting process of behavioral patterns of the surrounding culture, but the use of the term "adopt" means no reflection and it is not acceptable to assume that all the cultural patterns are adopted without any personal contribution, by each human being throughout its lifetime. In fact, the process of enculturation is a complex, dynamic one, and not equal in intensity and original contribution either for the same individual during the ontogenesis process or for people in general. It is a continuous learning process through experience, observation, education and reflection; it causes some degree of effective involvement of people in the culture they live in.

This era has a particular feature: the tremendous communication and movement of people world-wide. Even if the administrative borders still exist, or if the defined cultures are to be considered, the Planet is becoming more and more a "Global Village", as it is often called. It means that communication has no borders and people from the worldwide are involved in an ongoing movement.

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A strong acculturation process takes place in this millennium, a process expressing a high degree of meeting of cultures with all the changes it generates (Follo, 2010). This meeting of cultures, generating interdependences and inter-changes, reveals the existence of another phenomenon: transculturation, referring to a set of elements that are present in all cultures or the ethnocentric and unidirectional transfer of some elements from one culture to another (Follo, 2010).

Two types of perspectives are obvious in this definition: a structural perspective, in the first part, emphasizing the existence of common elements in different cultures, and a dynamic perspective focused on the way of determining the existence of these common elements through an ethnocentric and unidirectional transfer of elements from one culture to another.

Cultures are not static. They live through people and are developed by people. A continuous interaction with the surrounding world is obvious, interaction meaning both adapting to the environment and assimilating the environment to ones' self (Aymes, Buckley, Nyamiti, Biernatzki, Maurer, et al, 1991, pp. 1-99).

This is the reality of nowadays and it must be taken into account more than ever when it regards the teachers' training process.

Our first statement was a reflection about the necessity of a core competence profile with a worldwide dimension for teachers as professionals. A common effort of scholars and researchers has to be done with the explicit aim to design a teacher's competence profile, considered to be a professional.

1.2. Professional's Competence Profile; Structure and Role

We understand the competence profile as a matrix with a stable structure that defines the composition of a portrait that is afferent to a specific status: a school graduate of a specified level, a manager of a stated institution/organization, or a professional in a specified area. It is the equivalent to what in French literature is called référentielle. This structure includes concrete competencies in practice (Niculescu, 2010) for different professionals, for different levels of managerial status, etc.

For a professional on a defined area, the matrix will be structured on specific fields for the mentioned profession, with specifically connected competences. These competences are detailed by their components: knowledge, capacities - abilities, attitudes, including values.

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Each competence is structured on three levels, in terms of must (strictly necessary) should (necessary) and would (desirable), with different standards of their achievement.

Achieving the "must" level shows the accomplishment of the minimum acceptable standard of the presented competences. Qualitative differences are given by the levels of competence described as necessary and desirable (should and would levels); these qualitative differences depend on the number of completed competencies and their intrinsic quality parameters which are described by descriptors of performance, or standards. Such a detailed presentation that includes the types of competences is presented in the competences profile matrix in Table 1.

Table 1. Competences profile matrix detailed on levels and categories of competences (Niculescu, 2010, p. 119)

Matrix	General, transversal or transferable competences		Specific competences	
Detailed competences on:	General educational level	Specialty education level	General educational level	Specialty education level
Functionally structured knowledge	Would Should Must	Would Should Must	Would Should Must	Would Should Must
Capacities or capabilities/ abilities	Would Should Must	Would Should Must	Would Should Must	Would Should Must
Attitudes including values and features of personality	Would Should Must	Would Should Must	Would Should Must	Would Should Must

In the case of a teacher, for example, one may imagine three major areas of activity (Niculescu, 2010, pp. 117-120):

a. training as specialist (teachable area):

a.1. *specialized knowledge* structured on must, should, would levels, with the specification of volume and quality for each category, meaning especially their degree of structuring and functioning as *living knowledge.*

a.2. *capacities/abilities* of processing and enriching knowledge, with the same structure on must, should, would levels. Each level will have descriptors of performance for using these capacities/abilities;

a.3. *attitudes based on values*, *personality traits* with the same structure on must, should, would levels. Qualitative requests are to be connected.

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b. methodological level of training with:

b.1. *specific knowledge in the area of teaching methodology* structured on must, should, would levels, with the specification of volume and quality for each category, meaning especially their degree of structuring and functioning as *living methodological knowledge;*

b.2. *specific capacities/abilities* involved in the act of teaching - evaluating, with the same structure on must, should, would levels. Each level will have descriptors of performance for using these capacities/abilities;

b.3. *attitudes based on values, personality traits* with the same structure on must, should, would levels. Qualitative requests are to be connected.

c. human relations (including intercultural aspects) with:

c.1. *specific knowledge in the area of human relations*, of different cultures, or of social and professional movements, all structured on *must, should, would levels*, with the specification of volume and quality for each category, meaning especially their degree of structuring and functioning as *living psychosocial knowledge*;

c.2. *specific capacities/abilities involved in dealing with people belonging to the entire world;* they are structured in the same way *on must, should, would* levels. Each level will have descriptors of performance/standards for using these capacities/abilities;

c.3. *attitudes based on values, personality traits*, with the same structure on must, should, would levels. Qualitative requests are to be connected.

A well-defined matrix structure (Niculescu, 1995) should have a relatively high degree of stability. At the same time though, within each sequence of the matrix, updates will be needed. They will be determined by the socio-professional dynamics, and depend on other new specific requests of a particular profession, at a specified socio-historical time.

The utility of a competence profile is multiple. On one hand, it clearly defines an expectation level for a professional: (1) to be employed; (2) to be involved in a continuous educational training, in a reconversion training, or in a re-training activity for another area.

Such a profile can be the basis of the training needs analysis or the starting point in the selection for employment. In case of teachers' selection, for example, the competences listed as strictly necessary, with all their components, represent a required condition for application and a basis for the assessment. The real selection will be focused on the quality of the necessary and desirable competences (with their components); the winner should be the professional who demonstrates the highest number and the highest quality of their own competences of these two categories.

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The missing components of competences may be a starting point for future improvements, even for the winner (Niculescu, 2010, p. 120). The relationship between this competences profile and the curriculum is obvious. As long as the competences profile (référentielle) is clear and well defined, it becomes the ending point (the overall expectations) of any curriculum design and, ultimately, of any educational approach. It becomes a reporting element for establishing the expected outcomes (finalities) of the curriculum design.

Such a matrix could be considered a burden but it is not. Some other arguments can be presented. A profile of competences, clearly built, facilitates the construction of the outcomes (finalities), because it is a reference in the curriculum design. It gives a detailed answer to the question: what results are expected from the educational process? Going further with the analysis, the competence profile is a reference point for targeting the aims, goals and objectives in response to the question: which are the points that become intermediate targets on the trajectory toward finalities?

This process needs contents considered as proper answer for the question: what is necessary to be taught? The contents are easier to be established, if expected results and the direction of action (the purposes and objectives) are known.

The fulfillment of the expected results is possible only if the contents are properly taught and assessed.

Another important component is "time". It answers the question how long does it take or how much time is needed? Thus, after appropriate responses to all these questions, we could complete the structure of the learning situation as a central element of the curriculum. This structure highlights: the finalities (aims, goals, and objectives), contents, teaching methodology, assessing methodology, and time.

Focusing the curriculum on competences has determined a fierce debate. This curriculum philosophy centered on competence/ competences comes from William Spady (1993) and is rooted in *Mastery Learning* that has had a fairly wide acceptance, despite a number of critics which has been quite numerous. In Australia for example, authors like Willis & Kissane (1997), and Griffin (1998) consider that Spady's view is the basis of the philosophy centered on competencies curriculum. Spady (1994) describe three major categories of outputs of the educational process: *traditional, transitional* and *transforming* with a clear emphasis on the importance of the last category. The *traditional* outcomes emphasize the major role of the knowledge taken for granted, the *transition* category of outcomes and, further on, the *transforming* ones, place the major importance on competences, with

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slightly differential shades in the way in which these competences and their manner of construction are understood. An important note is that the focus of the design curriculum on competences does not mean exacerbating the evaluation component, in the sense of using some measuring instruments, where quantity is the core; assessment is seen as resulting from the demonstration of functional performance of competences, rather than from tests giving scores (Blyth, 2002, p. 13).

Andrew Blyth (2002, p. 13) defines competences (named skills) in a restrictive manner, in our opinion, considering them as performance capabilities demonstrated throughout life. In a certain sense, this definition also suggests only the visible side of an iceberg; somewhere deep down, there is knowledge that underlines these capacities and attitudes based on values that give direction and potentiate them.

We highlight the necessity to consider competences as a starting point of curriculum design and the final anchor of curriculum assessment, even if we do not entirely agree to Blyth's definition of competences.

Their role is twofold: on one hand, they give direction of action to the curricular construction and, implicitly, to the educational act and, on the other hand, they are reference elements in evaluation. The curriculum design should be centered on the learning situation as a whole with all its constituent elements. To establish from where we should go on building the curriculum does not mean to exaggerate the role of only one of the learning situation components but, on the contrary, to determine the best way of ensuring the synergy of all the components towards achieving finalities understood as presumed and assumed outcomes.

2. Intercultural Training. Open Issues

All people of the world need an intercultural training in the context of the new millennium. But for teachers, as important actors of the education of these people, the necessity seems to be more than obvious.

Diverse ways of teachers training can be found in the context of different national educational systems. However the teachers' training process seems to strongly need a common approach of the intercultural component. This may be possible based on research and a wisely found consensus. This consensus may start from a core philosophy about this issue and a common structure of the IC, of the core components of the teacher's IC.

We consider transdisciplinarity as a principle of the curriculum that states, behind or beyond everything, the idea that the most important aim

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for a curricular approach is to keep the focus on developing specific competences of learners, no matter what way is chosen for the structure of the curriculum contents. This means to focus the curriculum on the learner, an active and aware learner, strongly implied in his or her development through the educational process.

A curriculum design aiming to develop the IC of a teacher should consider an interdisciplinary, or maybe even a cross-curricular approach when it regards the way of structuring the curriculum contents (Niculescu, 2010, p. 81).

The effective existence of these structures of knowledge is highlighted by the learners' capacities; they are the obvious part of the IC, the top of the iceberg if we speak in metaphorical terms (Niculescu, 2010, p. 104), and have a general essence, possible to be developed within the contexts of a variety of knowledge fields and educational activities. This is another reason to plead for a variety of paths of contents' structures such as: interdisciplinary, pluridisciplinary (thematic), or even modular (Hainauţ, 1981).

The issue of the development of necessary attitudes for the IC (as a third but not least component) is more thorny than when it is about the development of the other two already mentioned components of a competence (knowledge and capacities); the reason relies on the complexity of the functioning area of this competence.

We accept that IC is an essential component of the teacher's competence profile as professional and it covers and exceeds the psychosocial field of this professional competence. An intercultural teacher should be: (1) well trained from the scientific point of view (owning both: a functional level of development of general culture and of a specialty culture; (2) high level trained as methodologist both for teaching and for the assessment process; (3) a model, a mentor and a facilitator of human and intercultural relations.

We agree to the idea that the intercultural field is one where the attitudes are much more important than knowledge, and they are fundamentals even for the development of appropriate capacities for an effective intercultural behavior (Văduva, 2001).

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3. Analyzing the Impact of an Experimental Research on the Development of the Intercultural Competence as a Component of Future Teacher's Competence Profile

Nedelcu (2008) argues and supports the vulnerability of the intercultural training of teachers, presenting the core threats generated by this vulnerability. This was a starting point of our ameliorative research that introduces as an independent variable a training program for IC of teachers. The program design has been based on a previously ran ascertaining research focused on: (1) identifying the factors of personality (with an intellectual and a non-intellectual nature) that contribute or, conversely, hinder the training and development of IC; (2) establishing the main directions of an educational intervention. This first step of our research had been the topic of another presentation.

The mentioned program has been designed as an optional structure of the curriculum for teacher's training.

3.1. Fundamentals of an Intercultural Curriculum Design

Nedelcu (2008, p. 147) presents several important aspects connected to the mentioned vulnerability, summarized and adapted further.

The gap between the school training program, on one hand, and the real worldwide reflected in the real world of school, on the other hand, the gap between teacher's culture and the culture of students seem to be sources for this vulnerability. They are obvious when analyzing the teacher training programs that still are strongly affected by traditional pedagogy, which either ignores the real teacher profile or ignores the reality of multicultural school environment.

The current program of teachers' training in the world and particularly in Romania is characterized by a lack of a coherent model of training focused on diversity. The institutions for teachers' training (insufficient well stated as well defined structures everywhere in world) seem to be dominated by a reluctant or even conservative attitude toward the issue of training for interculturality as an attitude. Too often this aspect is superficially approached and involved only to respond to a formal requirement. Indeed, we may add at this point that a new worrying trend towards formalism appears in the formal education area. This trend oversize care for form and dangerously neglects the substance, in everything that happens in education worldwide lately. The crazy rush for accumulating assessment points, involved in educators' evaluation process, hijack the

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focus on quantity instead of quality. The teachers' training programs in the world are mostly focused on developing specialists in a specified knowledge area, with some methodological knowledge connected or not to the necessary capacities for how to teach, but all these are situated on a second level of importance. The issue of training for developing a genuine IC if it exists is marginalized, placed on an optional status, and treated in an extremely formalistic manner.

Munoz (1999) indicates a number of obstacles that appear in achieving an effective IE. A brief and adapted selection of those obstacles that may be important (in our vision) for the designing and implementing of the curriculum focused on IE further presented.

The lack of a proper diagnosis of the learners' real needs in order to be trained as intercultural competent teachers, connected to the ignoring of the sociological realities of the environment seem to be important obstacles in obtaining an adequate curriculum design. A poor understanding of the deep meaning of the partnership between school environment and community influences the quality of a proper IE. The lack of time and of an intrinsic motivation for IE when dealing with the teachers of the future is another possible obstacle. Their focus on a lot of bureaucratic actions that increasingly burden the school life on all the levels steals precious time and diminishes the teachers' motivation. Unfortunately these obstacles are known but nobody seems to be interested or strong enough to avoid or eliminate them.

Nowadays, more than ever in history, IC has become an absolutely necessary dimension of a competent personality. It refers to those skills, behaviors and practices that allow individuals to interact effectively with others coming from different backgrounds. IC includes, inter alia, respect for people, self-respect for who they are and appreciation of cultural differences between them.

Teachers play a key role in the development of any student's IC; they can affect future generations' thought and action. It is not enough for teachers themselves to be intercultural competent. They should encourage the development of students' IC. Teachers have the opportunity to intervene on students' conscience, to open their horizons and give them the tools to critically analyze socio-cultural phenomena. In addition, IC is necessary because teachers' professional ethics make them responsible for the personal development and academic support of all students regardless their background, culture, language, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so on (Nieto, 2000, p. 4). Teachers are not allowed to choose to whom they offer learning support in a discriminative way.

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We support the idea that intercultural learning is essential for a teacher and is a process that lasts a lifetime. Nobody became competent within the context of a taught or received course about IC or traveling and meeting different cultures. However, specifically designed activities may have a greater influence and can represent turning points in intercultural learning of teachers. Although intercultural learning is a lifelong process and is often informal and incidental, formal education plays an important role in this process. Thus we find as useful intercultural training courses, exchanges of best practices, interethnic and interfaith contacts.

Generally speaking, intercultural learning has not been studied in depth, although it is necessary to understand the process if one wants to develop and propose an education that trains and develops the IC. Intercultural learning is a matter of attitude. But to have attitudinal connotations it must be based on understanding of the values and norms of coexistence, understanding followed by their acceptance emotionally to determine their turning into beliefs, as motivational structures with a genuine force for an adequate social behavior.

Luis Amorim (Amorim, L., 2001, pp. 3-4) drew the inventory of attitudinal issues involved in intercultural learning. Briefly these are: trust and respect; exploring of own cultural identity (motivation and capability); perception of reality as a personal building understanding and acceptance of this type of bias which implies: respect for decisions and personal freedom, admissibility of different views as equal in value, concern for reconciling different viewpoints, awareness of personal responsibility. Other features may be added: openness to dialogue with each other; acceptance and permanent interrogation concerning own changes; acceptance and proper management of potential conflict of encounter between different cultures.

IC is a transversal competence. The capacities which are implied transcend a particular area / study program; they have a transdisciplinary nature (Trașcă, 2009) because, we highlight, they are developed in a cross-curriculum manner with a transferable potential, and they are results of an effective implementation of curriculum.

Structuring the curriculum content in an interdisciplinary manner, ensuring the connection of several fields of knowledge, or multidisciplinary, thematic, melting in the context of a theme more ideas and information coming from many such areas, both of them being accompanied by a methodological approach to teaching and evaluation focus on competence development can produce transversal and transferable competences, including IC (Niculescu, 2010).

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The main goal of IE is to form IC based on personality traits that revolve around values and attitudes that can be synthesized by: intellectual tolerance, human rights, human understanding and adaptability (Chun-Mei, 2002).

Intercultural training involves at least two interconnected dimensions: a dimension of knowledge - objective and involving different perspectives, and a dimension of experience - subjective and relational (Rey, 1999, p. 180).

The same author describes the types of necessary acquisitions for developing the IC having two coordinates as milestones: (1) the acquisition of conceptual tools that require defined knowledge about human rights in a world whose features must at least generically known if not in depth (Allmen, 1996, p. 78); (2) methodological acquisitions providing an appropriate support (conceptual, normative and instrumental) for those who can and should develop IC for the members of society (Allmen, 1996, pp. 78-80).

Several principles of IE are to be presented: (1) Understanding the internal logic of each culture as a necessity; (2) Avoiding considering each culture as being sacred; (3) Keeping the focus on relativity; considering the heterogeneity; admitting the possibility of misunderstandings and conflicts (Camilleri, 1999, pp. 210-214). These principles and a number of practical ways to be respected in school practice are also presented in UNESCO - Guidelines on Intercultural Education (UNESCO, 2006, pp. 32-39). According to all these ideas, principles and requests an interesting competence profile of an intercultural teacher may be designed.

A distinction between the IC in general, the intercultural dimension of teacher's competences profile, and the specific IC of the teacher as trainer of the students' IC seems to be necessary.

Speaking in general, an intercultural person may be defined as demonstrating the existence and operation of the following knowledge, values and features (Kealey, 1990): adaptability, modesty and respect, understanding the concept of culture, a good knowledge of local culture and of own culture, ability to build relationships, self-knowledge, intercultural communication ability, organizational skills and, not least, personal and professional involvement.

Beyond the specific competences of a teacher, interesting defined by Paige (1996) or Tickle (2007), the intercultural dimension of the teacher's competence profile should be defined and detailed, aiming to create appropriate expectations as outcomes of any curriculum involved in the training for the teaching profession.

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Along Cucoş (2000), we highlight four dimensions of an intercultural teacher: (1) the cognitive dimension involving knowledge mainly but not exclusively of history, geography, sociology; (2) methodological dimension (capacity of using effective methods in terms of valuing the differences and the common aspects of various cultures; (3) personal dimension expressed by the capacity of a teacher to identify and diminish own stereotypes and preconceptions; relational dimension focused manly but not exclusively on the student-teacher relationship.

According to Karen Risager (2000), the intercultural teacher is able to describe and assess the own level of IC. Affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions may be subject to such an assessment.

3.2. Reflections on Intercultural Training in Romania

The need for intercultural teacher training is the subject of extensive debate in the Romanian and international educational space. Despite the fact that "intercultural education is currently in the focus of all education systems and of all educators" (Plugaru, Pavalache, 2008 p. 134), the current data suggests a real difference between the rhetoric of the need for intercultural teacher training and what is actually happening in practice. Here are some of the arguments that marked this debate.

Romania has by law a formal training for teachers on academic level. A national curriculum is designed with some possibilities of adding local specificity to this design. C-tin Cucos considers that "initial teacher training for IE is almost nonexistent, in our universities, teacher's training follows more a technical path toward an academic specialization" (Cucoş, 2011, p. 48). The only approach of intercultural training may be found on master level programs, the subject having an optional status, "this means that only motivated students interested in cultural diversity will attend these courses, whereas those that show more racist attitudes and disregard for others will not choose these courses (Ciges & Lopez, 1998).

A timid approach of intercultural training appears in the curriculum of lower secondary school since 2010. At the upper secondary level the approach of interculturality appears only as a possible one school year involved in locally decided curriculum (Ivasiuc, Koreck, Kővári, 2010, p. 24). A special training for teaching IE cannot be found.

We strongly agree with the position of J. A. Banks (2001, p. 5), which states that "professional development programs should help teachers understand the complex characteristics of ethnic groups […] and the ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interact to influence student

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behavior". Therefore, "it is not surprising that teacher training programs are a certain urgency […]" (Zeichner, 1993). More than that, intercultural teacher training "must be thought both in terms of an initial process and a continuous process" (Rey, 1999, p. 194).

3.3. The Matrix of Training Program for Developing the Intercultural Competence of Future Teachers

The intercultural dimension of the future teachers' competence profile is valued in our team, but because of the national curriculum requests in the field, it is considered more as an implicit approach focused on using the interactive teaching - assessing methodology and fructifying all the content and contextual opportunities for developing components of the mentioned dimension. But an explicit approach has been felt as necessary.

Thus, based on the previous synthesis of the theoretical fundaments of the IC necessity, we present a brief exposure of an ameliorative research as one of the sequences of a complex research centered on IE on academic level. This sequence involved the design and the implementation of a curriculum explicitly aiming to develop the components of the IC. It represents the independent variable that is assumed as being a possible responsible of an obvious development of the intercultural competence for the selected experimental group, compared to a control group. The research design followed the necessary steps and the results have been processed statistically and interpreted in the light of the fundamental theory and of a direct observation in the educational field.

The design of an optional curriculum, presented here, has been initiated after finding out the determinants of the IC through an ascertaining stage of our research. This design has been done according to the pyramidal model of curriculum (Niculescu, 2010, p. 81), as shown in the following figure.

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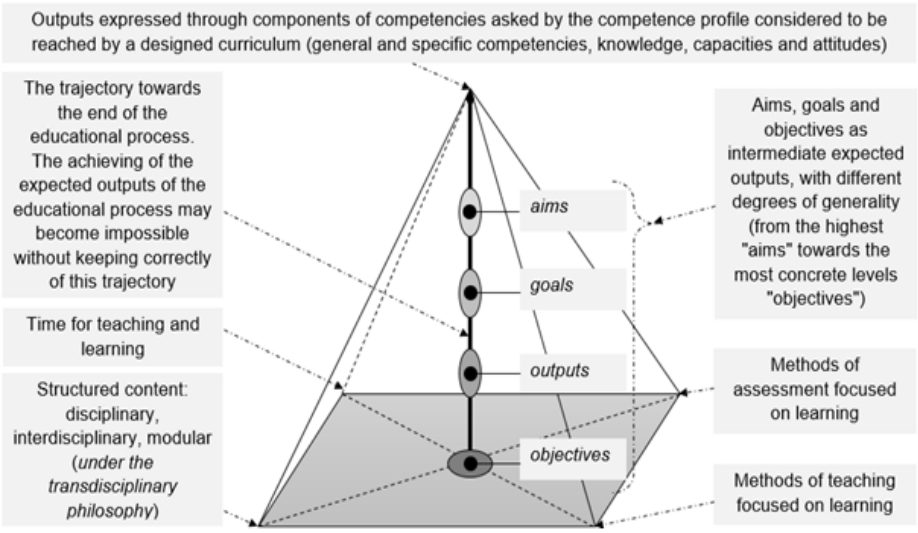


Figure 1. Structure of a learning situation

The expected outcomes/outputs conceived as competences or components of competences (knowledge, attitudes, and capacities as the obvious part of a competence) have been the first designed elements. Their specificity has been determined by the context of the features of the Romanian system of teachers' training, on one hand, and those of multi and interculturality in Romania, on the other hand. All the five components of the learning situation, as core issue of a curriculum, have been taken into account.

We present next the matrix of the training program. In the spirit of building an articulated curricular approach, the matrix integrates the aims of the program (expected outcomes). The training program has allocated a total budget of 14 hours, with a pace of one hour per week.

Table 2. Competences profile matrix detailed on levels and categories of competences

Components of IC	Specific competencies	Operationalizing of the specific competencies
Key concepts	C.1. The ability/ capacity to properly use a specific terms of IE;	1.1. Analysis of the structure of IC in terms of its internal components (knowledge, capacities and attitudes) and of correlative external dimensions (task, situation, context); 1.2. Capacity to describe the specific structural elements of IC;

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		1.3. Capacity to compare theoretical interpretational models of IC; 1.4. Capacity of illustration of the distinctive processes: enculturation, acculturation, acculturation and of their associated phenomena (stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination);
Intercultural attitudes	C.2. The ability/ capacity to positively value the cultural differences;	2.1. Availability for intercultural dialogue and cooperation; 2.2. Willingness to develop and submit a project aiming to deepen a cross-cultural themes on team bases; 2.3. Showing a conciliatory attitude in multicultural conflict situation; 2.4. Willingness to seek solutions to resolve peaceful multicultural conflicts;
Intercultural experiences	C.3. Ability/ capacity to critically analyze specific elements of the own culture and other cultures.	3.1. Ability to interact effectively with individuals and groups from other cultures; 3.2. Assertive communications ability of the agreement or disagreement/dissatisfaction to the specific elements of their own culture and other cultures; 3.3. Ability to display respect for the own cultural identity and to the cultural identity of others.

The teaching methodology is determined by the conjunction between finalities (expected outcomes) and contents, but they highly depend on the specific of the students (gender, age, cultural background). In itself, "the methods are not pleasing or threatening, emotional or idealistic - but the contents and trainers may be" (Fowler & Mumford, 1995, p. 14). Whatever method is chosen by a trainer, it is animated by the trainer' style. No doubt that the efficiency of a chosen method also depends on the students' learning style.

Most trainers take into consideration the fundamentals offered by the theoretical model of experiential learning cycle of Kolb (1984). This model was the basis of our approach, as well. We were focused on achieving the designed competences at optimal standards. Important issues have been taken into consideration, both in design as well as in implementation and

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evaluation: 1) each student has a predilection for one of the four steps of the learning cycle; 2) the pedagogical approach must cover all four steps, regardless of individual dominants; these dominants have been fructified positively by teamwork; 3) the nature of different tasks has been centered on each step: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and/or practicing active, depending on the content and linked to competence development pursued.

Our experiment took place into a very specific multicultural context. This issue is quite important because the cultural context has an important impact on different aspects: trainer's and students' philosophy about learning, assessment, communication styles and, implicitly on teaching methodology.

Thus, methods also reflect these differences. For example, the story, as a method, used in an indirect culture, should not conclude, because it is expected that listeners to formulate their own decision or conclusions, according to the way they discover and decode the core issue implicitly existing within the story. In a more direct culture, trainers want to ensure that participants establish a conclusion, so, explicitly gives the idea, often even at the beginning of the story. The real difficulty appears when the group of students is heterogeneous and gathering people belonging to different cultures. In this situation the trainer should adapt the use of the story to all the students and this involves pedagogical talent. Cultural differences are evident in the way people participate in role plays. In Asian culture there are very important rules. In Western culture, the participants often violate the rules or ignore them (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). Trainers need to be sufficiently flexible in applying the method appropriately from the point of view of the student's cultural background and taking into consideration the formative role of the method.

Fowler & Blohm (2004, p. 42) state: "The fear of shame and loss are important considerations in some cultures". When this is a strong concern for the participants in a training program, it would be inappropriate to start a session by asking them to self-disclosure or personal opinions. To be successful, the formation of such a group would probably start by gradually advancing towards the theoretical aspects using with discretion the practical experience within applied activities.

Also there are cultural preferences in terms of dominant style of learning. A series of cultural values may affect how learners respond to training methods. Here we include respect for authority, emphasis on the group to the detriment of the individual (or vice versa), collaboration or competition, orientation in space and time, etc.

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Another thorny issue is represented by the balance of the focus on different components of a competence. Unfortunately, a significant number of specialty materials consider competence as being represented only by what a human is able to do. But "doing" is determined by "*knowing*" and the quality of the made product is strongly determined by "*being*", the philosophy about life and work of human, the system of human's attitudes and features of personality. Thus, it becomes extremely important to keep the right balance between these three aspects: knowledge, capacities/abilities and personality traits based on attitudes and values. The peak of the iceberg (capacities) is observable, but it does not exist without the consistence of what the peak represents and of what is hidden under water (knowledge) and without the equilibrium of floating in the mass of water (attitudes) and any educational program must consider all these three aspects as a whole.

All these ideas are the fundamentals of our research, generally speaking, and of designing the curriculum for a special training for developing IC, as an independent variable.

4. Research Methodology

The intention of our study is to verify, with statistical means, the efficacy of the designed curriculum aiming to develop the future teachers' IC.

- Objectives of research

The objectives of our study are:
O1. *Determining* the starting level of the core components of IC of the students selected for the research group.
O2. *Implementing the pedagogical intervention* program (the designed curriculum, explicitly focused on developing IC);
O3. *Assessing* the impact of this curriculum on students (experimental group).

- The general hypothesis

The implementation of a curriculum aiming to develop the IC of the future teachers (students enrolled in the initial cycle of training for teaching career) leads to significant qualitative results.

- Specific working hypotheses

The specific working hypotheses of our research are presented below. They are connected to the previously presented objectives, and derive from the general hypothesis.

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H.1. There are statistically insignificant differences between the experimental group and control group, in the pre-test phase; the comparison is focused on the explicit and implicit measurement results of IC;

H.2. There are statistically significant differences between the results registered for the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test moments; the comparison is focused on the explicit and implicit measurement results of IC.

H.3. There isn't a statistically significant difference between the results registered for the control group in the pre-test and post-test moments; the comparison is focused on the explicit and implicit measurement results of IC.

H.4. There is a statistically significant difference in post-test moment between the experimental group and control group, due to the explicit and implicit comparison of the results of measurements of IC.

- Research participants

The participants in the study were students of Transylvania University in Brasov, Romania, specialty: Pedagogy of early, pre-school, and primary education (experimental group: 40 participants), Special education and Psychology (control group: 54 participants), studying in the second year at the moment of the research.

- Stages of experimental research

The experimental design developed and implemented to train the IC assumed the completion of three distinct phases, summarized in the following table.

Table 3. Phases of research design

Phases of research / Research group	Pre-test phase	Experimental intervention phase	Post-test phase
Experimental group	Establishing the start level of the IC for each member of the two research groups	Curriculum implementation	Measuring the dependent variable (with subcomponents) and comparing the results achieved by the two groups with the establishment of statistical significance
Control-group		Non-intervention	

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- Research instruments

Research instruments used in the pre-test and post-test were Intercultural Competence Assessment Questionnaire (ICAQ) and Implicit Association Test (IAT-IC) (Bazgan, Norel, 2013).

4.1. Results of experimental research

According to the mentioned objectives and previously presented hypotheses a presentation of the results is intended.

- The results of the pre-test phase

There are statistically insignificant differences between the experimental group and control group, in the pre-test phase; the comparison is focused on the explicit and implicit measurement results of IC. The 94 participants have obtained similar scores when the level of IC has been measured implicitly and explicitly by applying the two mentioned tools (ICAQ and IAT-IC). The obtained results have verified the hypothesis that assumes an insignificant statistically difference in pre-test phase between the two experimental groups (hypothesis 1).

- The results of the post-test phase

Two types of comparisons have been drawn for the post-test phase: (1) one between the obtained results by the experimental group, before and after implementing the curriculum aiming to develop explicitly the subjects' IC, under the assumption of finding out significant statistically differences between the two phases; the results confirm this assumption (Hypothesis 2).

The coefficient t for paired samples obtained by applying pre-test – post-test of the two instruments for measuring IC were: $t(39) = 10.733$, $p < .01$ for implicit association test results (IAT-IC) and $t(39) = 16.285$, $p < .01$ for the results of IC assessment questionnaire (ICAQ). Thus, the hypothesis 2 is verified. In the meantime the same action applied for the control group obtained insignificant statistically scores, verifying the hypothesis 3. In this case $t(53) = .584$, $p > .05$ for IAT-IC, and $t(53) = .16$, $p > .05$ for ICAQ (Hypothesis 3 is verified).

The second comparison has been done between the two groups of subjects connected to the fourth hypothesis that assumes: there is a statistically significant difference in post-test moment between the

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experimental group and control group, determined by the implementation of the designed curriculum at the experimental group.

The obtained results confirm this assumption. Thus t coefficient for both groups in case of IAT-IC was $t(92) = 3.186$, $p < .01$, while values obtained for t in ICAQ case were: $t(92) = 2.376$; $p < .05$.

The meaning of the changes in the experimental group, following the pedagogical intervention, can be detected by comparing the absolute averages for the two tests (ICAQ and IAT-IC) in pre-test and post-test. The lower IAT-IC score is, the higher is the level of IC. The higher ICAQ score is, the higher is the level of IC, as well.

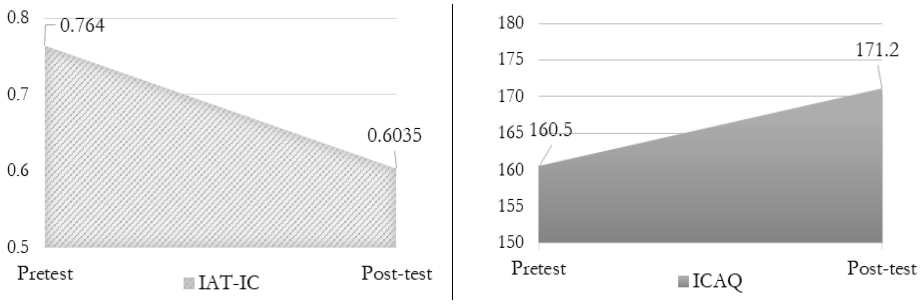


Figure 2. Evolution of the average scores IAT-IC and ICAQ stages pre-test and post-test

The following graphics express the previously mentioned relation; it is about the inverse relationship between the results from IAT-IC and the level of IC expressed by the results from ICAQ.

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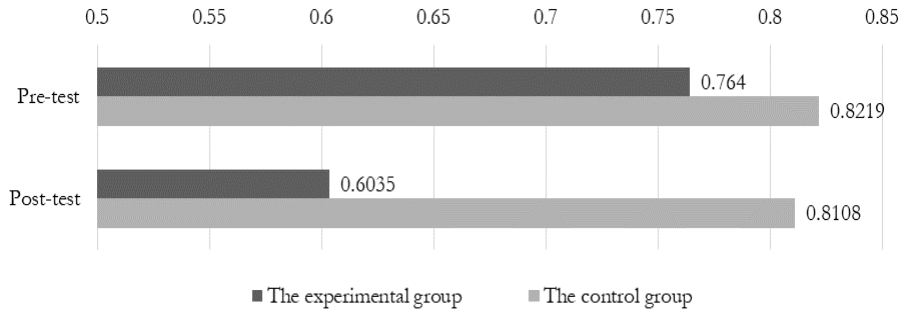


Figure 3. Comparative results of the two groups of research for IAT-IC pre-test and post-test phases

These graphics also show the consistent difference between the pre-test and post test results of the experimental group, compared to the modest modification in the same direction of the control group's results. Thus, the results for IAT-IC decrease (fig. 4) from .8219 to .8108, for the control group, and from .764 to .6035 for the experimental one. Concurrently, an increase of the CE–CI results appears in both cases (fig. 5); it is significant for the experimental group: from 160.5 to 171.275, while at the control group the growth starts from 158.851 and end at 159.296.

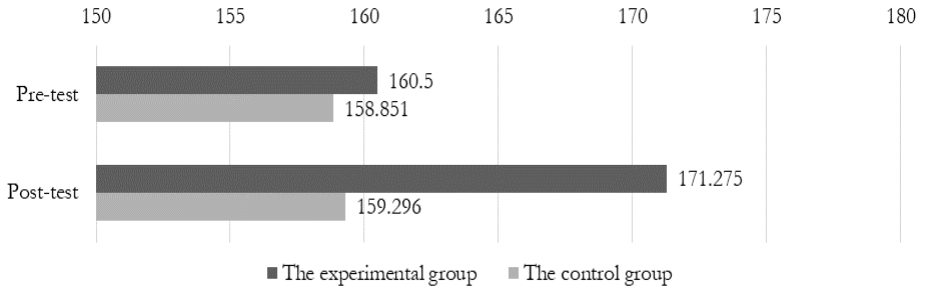


Figure 4. Comparative results of the two groups of research for ICAQ pre-test and post-test phases

These two graphics contain arguments for proving the four specific hypotheses of our research. The general hypothesis of the research is verified whether the mentioned changes are not due to maturation process of the participants. This statement is checked by comparing the scores obtained from the use of the two assessment tools in the same conditions and at the same time, applied both for the control group and experimental group. The results of the control group have the possibility to clarify the nature of the modifications registered on the level of the experimental group.

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5. Brief conclusions of the experimental research

The presented results as a brief selection from the significant number of obtained data, connected to our observation of the students along the entire period of the experiment give enough reasons to conclude that a specifically designed curriculum aiming to develop explicitly the IC of students involved in training for a teaching career proved to have the expected results. It is obvious, on the other hand that, a short and optional curriculum with this purpose is not sufficient.

A complex strategy should be imagined and implemented. The main steps of this strategy may be: 1) establishing and continuously up-dating the matrix of the so called IC as a final point for any educational intervention. Only a right understanding of what being an intercultural teacher means in each moment of our contemporary history, can offer the milestones for designing an effective curriculum of an appropriate training; 2) designing and improving constantly a curricula for explicit training of this dimension of an effective teacher for the generations of the future; 3) implementing effectively the designed and improved curricula connected to a general favorable attitude, to an intercultural behavior (the maximum attention for the hidden curriculum in formal contexts); 4) stimulating the positive influences and helping in the blocking of the negative influences coming from non-formal and informal fields.

A deep awareness of the educational activity, valuing correctly the intercultural dimension of any personality of nowadays and tomorrow, in general, and of a teacher, particularly, seem to be the key ways of changing the humanity's future.

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