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**METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION***Ioana BOGHIAN**Moldova State University*

The present paper aims at: analysing the data from the literature, the study of the school documents regarding the potential of intercultural education to promote the values of tolerance; offer methodological directions for the teaching of intercultural education focused on the values of tolerance for the beneficiaries of adult learning, namely students.

The present paper was elaborated within the doctoral research conducted at the Moldova State University. The doctoral project aims to be a research on intercultural education from the perspective of current approaches and models. Tolerance is approached as a key value in intercultural education as a possible response of education and its outcomes to the tense transformation processes that society is undergoing at the beginning of this millennium. The theoretical part of the project is represented by the presentation of intercultural education from the perspective of current approaches and models, and the concept of tolerance from the perspective of psycho-pedagogy. The applicative part envisions how intercultural education can contribute to tolerance as a key value in a society marked by economic, political, ecological, medical, climatic and ideological transformations that have crossed national and regional borders and where individuals, groups and people who feel, think and act differently interact, by designing and implementing an optional academic course for students who are preparing for the teaching career.

The purpose of the doctoral project is to develop a theoretical and practical model for achieving intercultural education focused on promoting tolerant attitudes with applicability in university education and adult education.

**Keywords:** *intercultural education, values, tolerance, respect, solidarity, mutual help, method.*

**DIRECȚII METODOLOGICE PENTRU PREDAREA EDUCAȚIEI INTERCULTURALE**

În prezenta lucrare ne propunem să analizăm datele de cunoaștere provenite din literatura de specialitate, din studiul documentelor școlare referitoare la potențialul educației interculturale de a promova valorile toleranței; să oferim direcții metodologice pentru predarea educației interculturale axate pe valorile toleranței la beneficiari ai învățării adulți, respectiv studenți.

Prezenta lucrare a fost elaborată în cadrul cercetării doctorale efectuate la Universitatea de Stat din Moldova. Proiectul de doctorat se dorește a fi o cercetare asupra educației interculturale din perspectiva abordărilor și modelelor actuale. Toleranța este abordată ca valoare-cheie în educația interculturală, ca posibil răspuns al educației și al finalităților acesteia la procesele tensionate de transformare la care este supusă societatea la începutul acestui mileniu. Partea teoretică a proiectului este reprezentată de prezentarea educației interculturale din perspectiva abordărilor și modelelor actuale, a conceptului de toleranță din perspectivă psihopedagogică. Partea aplicativă vizează modul în care educația interculturală poate contribui la asumarea toleranței ca valoare-cheie într-o societate asaltată de transformări economice, politice, ecologice, medicale, climatice și ideologice ce au depășit granițele naționale și regionale și în care acționează indivizi, grupuri și popoare care simt, gândesc și acționează în mod diferit prin elaborarea și implementarea unui curs universitar opțional pentru studenții care se pregătesc pentru cariera didactică.

Scopul proiectului doctoral este de a elabora un model teoretic și acțional de realizare a educației interculturale axat pe promovarea atitudinii tolerante cu aplicabilitate în învățământul universitar și educația adulților.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *educație interculturală, valori, toleranță, respect, solidaritate, inrajuitorare, metodă.*

**1. Introduction: a psychopedagogical approach to intercultural education**

Intercultural education (IE) is a pedagogical approach to cultural diversity that takes into account the spiritual (cultural) and other particularities (gender, social or economic) and attempts to avoid the risks arising from all sorts of inequalities and differences. Intercultural interaction skills can be acquired by learning specific behaviours within formal, informal or non-formal educational influences. The literature interconnects cultural competence with the following key concepts: intercultural knowledge, civic knowledge and involvement, knowledge of culture and physical world, abilities for a global world [1], communication in foreign languages, social civic competence, consciousness and expression of cultural identity [2].

Considering the relevance of the teacher's role of model for students of all ages, Cojocariu and Albu have conducted a longitudinal study on the values cherished by Romanian teachers at different educational levels, namely: truth, good, equity, patience, responsibility, love for others, faith in God, professionalism, respect,

work/effort/dedication, honesty, morality, dignity [3, 4, 5-10]. In recent years, increased practice of tolerance relies on promoting such values as: harmonious cohabitation, respect for the rights of others, acceptance of diversity, free choice of value options [11].

The literature reviews we have conducted enabled us to draw the following conclusions:

- education for tolerance is associated with intercultural education in a relevant number of papers and articles;
- increased tolerance capacity is a means and purpose of intercultural education;
- examples of (in)tolerance should be used as a teaching material to raise awareness of the different dimensions and meanings of tolerance;
- tolerance is a central value of 21<sup>st</sup>-century education;
- tolerant attitude and tolerant behaviour are acquired based on patterns, starting with the earliest ages;
- school is a small society, suitable for raising awareness of the phenomenon of tolerance and practicing it in several circumstances and relationships;
- tolerance is not a feeling inherited by birth, but acquired through education;
- the implementation and development of tolerance education is hampered by the fact that teachers, parents, students, other actors involved in the educational process do not understand the goals, principles and usefulness of learning tolerance [12].

Based on the skills and attitudes essential to negotiating identity in society, Neuner [13] highlighted the objectives of intercultural education, namely:

- building empathy (attitude inclined towards trying to understand others in their own socio-cultural contexts), with the cognitive and affective aspects involved;
- building multiperspectivity (the ability to realize that not all people share our vision of our world, the absence of which leads to stereotypes and prejudices)
- building acceptance of ambiguity (the ability to accept that others are different from us and sometimes there are no definite answers about alterity and difference)
- building self-awareness and identity representation (awareness of the socio-cultural bases of one's world that influences one's worldview - traditions, values, judgments - everyday life - routines, rituals, lifestyle - formal attitudes);
- developing emotional openness for dealing with others in a multicultural environment;
- building the ability to self-regulate one's conduct and speech to avoid monopolization (creating a balance between dominant and shy people in a multicultural group to avoid exclusion and self-isolation);
- building linguistic competence (mother tongue contributes to identity modelling, therefore understanding a language means better understanding of the speaker of that language) [13, p.35-38].

The following values have been identified as values associated with/ promoted by intercultural education, in national and international works: tolerance, freedom, equality, respect for differences and the rights of others, solidarity, cooperation, empathy, acceptance of diversity [3, 4, 14-19].

## **2. Methodological guidelines for teaching intercultural education**

### *2.1. Brief curricular outlines*

Intercultural education focused on the values of tolerance (IEVT) aims at highlighting tolerance values and forming a tolerant attitude that translates into acceptance of cultural, ethnographic, nutritional, gender, etc. differences, the idea that there are no solutions to all problems and no single perspective on a situation characterized by conflict or conflict risk based on discrimination.

The overall objective of the IEVT module is to build and develop tolerant attitudes and enhance tolerance attitudes where these already exist in the sense of recognizing and respecting human dignity by developing the capacity to accept diversity and be actively involved in social life. The attitude of active tolerance is broadly understood as the ability to accept diversity and to be actively involved in social life.

The purpose of the IEVT module is to increase active tolerance attitudes by forming tolerant consciousness and emotional skills that reflect social cultural reflection and the level of education of the person.

The specific objectives of the IEVT module aim at forming certain attitudes, capacities and knowledge; after completing the IEVT module, the learners will be able to:

- explain the meaning of tolerance and identify its components

- argue for the need for tolerant communication and manifestation of an active tolerant attitude
- explain the phenomena of social intolerance, identify its causes and possible measures to eliminate/control/reduce such phenomena
- identify and distinguish between moral values of nonvalues
- accept the expression of the diversity of axiological views in communication and interaction
- communicate empathically and express an open attitude during exchanges of opinions and ideas
- demonstrate a pacifist approach in situations of intrapersonal and social conflict to find a solution
- develop and promote in every communication context principles and rules of communication in the spirit of the culture of tolerance
- manifest emotional skills (constructive and creative spontaneity, assertiveness, emotional stability, empathy, sociability, self-knowledge)
- identify changes in one's level of understanding socio-cultural diversity and, implicitly, one's level of tolerance towards active discrimination-vulnerable persons.

IEVT-specific activities target the use of content associated with the specific objectives listed above. The contents of the IEVT module are selected to meet specific objectives. The topics of IEVT activities will refer to the following contents:

- The culture of respect; tolerance culture and tolerance values; tolerant vs. intolerant attitude – characteristics
- National and international discrimination legislation
- Identity and stereotypes; affirmation of identity and celebration of diversity
- The effects of stereotypes; prejudices and discrimination; equity and inequity
- Approaches to diversity in education; adapting intercultural and anti-discrimination education to the Romanian context
- Development of strategies for preventing and combating prejudices and racism in class.

The contents listed above correspond to the specific objectives needed to increase the level of active tolerance attitudes, operationalized for adult learners, which represent information about tolerance values and general-human values: good, truth, beauty.

The activities of the IEVT module exploit classical and modern methods of teaching-learning-evaluation and self-evaluation: exposition, conversation, demonstration, debate and problem-solving, explanation, exercise and reflection themes, case study, peer learning, the pyramid, cubing, 6 thinking hats, the fishbowl technique, the jigsaw, the conceptual map, the tour of the gallery, the portfolio, etc.

The resources and didactic means necessary for conducting IEVT activities support the application of the teaching methods mentioned above: video projector, audio-video recordings, worksheets, questionnaires, self-evaluation sheets, etc.

The perspective from which intercultural education is addressed at each course and seminar is that of moral rules and values. Tolerance as a value and tolerant attitude is reflected in communication; increasing tolerant active attitudes can be achieved through the acquisition of tolerance values and their activation through the manifestation of behaviour based on active tolerance.

Values/ characteristics of the active tolerant attitude include: care, gratefulness, forgiveness, generosity, sincerity, truth, honesty, virtue, responsibility, self-control, tolerance, patience, punctuality, creativity, initiative, ingenuity, discretion, industry, sensitivity, reason, loyalty, enthusiasm, hospitality, flexibility, courage, compassion, perseverance, respect, wisdom, joy, gentleness, humility.

We further present some suggestions for the IEVT curriculum development directions, with reference to:

#### *General competences*

1. Using the concepts specific to social sciences for organizing the approaches to knowledge and explanation of facts, events, processes in real life.
2. Applying knowledge specific to social sciences in solving some problematic situations, as well as in analysing personal development possibilities.
3. Cooperating with others in solving theoretical and practical problems within the different groups.
4. Manifesting an active and responsible social behaviour, appropriate to a constantly changing world.
5. Participate in decision-making and community problem solving.

#### *Values and attitudes*

- Positive valorisation of cultural differences;

- Positive attitude towards people and groups belonging to different cultures that support different values, opinions and beliefs;
- Respect for one's own cultural identity and the cultural identity of others; respect for dignity and human rights;
- Tolerance and understanding;
- Peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- Cultural empathy;
- Civic spirit;
- Availability for intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

A first principle of intercultural education considers *heterogeneity* a norm (as a term from which the concept of "normality" was derived), and not a handicap requiring additional support. This heterogeneity, as a rejection of ethnic, cultural, identity and interest homogeneity, is the denial of totalitarianism and a means of guaranteeing the values of open and democratic society. At the same time, intercultural education is not a way of levelling or compensating for inequalities, but a means of enhancing equality.

Another principle of intercultural education is the idea that individuals and, implicitly, the groups they are part of, are constantly subject to a process of cross-breeding, a producer of continuous diversity. Noteworthy here is the convergence of this principle with the constructivist perceptions of the concept of culture, according to which any culture is constantly changing due to its permeability to influences from the outside. When the idea of permanent dynamics of any culture is assumed, essentialist prejudices and rigid stereotypes are more vulnerable and easier to dismantle.

Intercultural education also promotes a certain kind of *cognitive dynamics* of the student. It is about learning a movement from the centre of your own culture and its own rules towards the outside, so that you can look at the values of alterity as much as possible from the point of view of the other. This principle seems difficult to put into practice, since every individual is the product of one's own culture. From this point of view, there is no possibility of a *tabula rasa* state, whereby the individual can completely "get rid of" internalized values through education. But what intercultural education brings in this process of relativizing our own values is the learning to open to otherness, to understand it from the point of view of its values. This relativization of one's own values must be achieved in an environment of continuous and reciprocal interaction. Judgments of value are removed, the difference is no longer stigmatized, but on the contrary, emphasis is placed on what the individuals have in common, which allows them to use the same language: understand and value each other mutually. Thus, intercultural education is not only addressed to minority but also to members of the majority who have the same duty to relativize their own values, to combat stigmatizing value judgments and to value others.

Intercultural education promotes a constant dialogue, based on equality.

Regarding terminological debates, it is possible to conceptualize a series of dichotomies between related concepts such as intercultural education/education for diversity, intercultural education/ inclusive education, intercultural education/anti-bias education, etc.

## 2.2. Example: The Cubing method

*Definition:* Cubing, first proposed by Gregory and Elizabeth Cowan in *Writing* (1980), is a teaching-learning strategy that involves exploring a topic from multiple perspectives by applying an algorithm aimed at describing, comparing, associating, analysing, applying, arguing for/ against, with the purpose of acquiring new knowledge/attitudes/skills through cooperation.

*Presentation:* The Cubing method is a brainstorming strategy, highly suitable for a pre-writing activity, a method of cooperative learning that involves exploring a subject from multiple perspectives, allowing a complex and integrative approach to a topic; it involves abilities to:

- ✓ identify, name and describe (side 1 – DESCRIBE);
- ✓ understand, compare, order and classify (sides 2 and 3 – COMPARE, ASSOCIATE);
- ✓ activate critical-analytical thinking skills (side 4 – ANALYZE);
- ✓ develop the ability to issue judgments and build arguments (sides 5 and 6 – APPLY, ARGUE FOR or AGAINST).

### Steps//Stages

Cubing involves covering the following steps:

- 1) the teacher makes a cube and elaborates the tasks for each of the sides mentioned above;
- 2) announcing the topic of discussion;
- 3) the teacher divides the class into six groups and distributes a cube side to each group, together with the associated task; the distribution of the cube's sides / tasks can be done either randomly (each group rolls the cube and receives as a task the approach that comes up), or is set by the teacher based on certain criteria linked to individual and group responsibility, task-based specialization of the team members and group opportunities);
- 4) the working time is mentioned, the members of each group collaborate and solve the task received;
- 5) the final form of the results / materials of each group is presented and evaluated.

*Variant:* The tasks on each side of the cube can be solved in groups, as in the description above, or:

- 1) frontally (every task is read and debated by the teacher and the whole class);
- 2) individually (each task/side of the cube is assigned to one student who works on solving it independently; students may take turns in rolling the cube, so that each student may also get the chance to work on several tasks/sides) [20].

Also, a version of cubing involves the use of several cubes, each with different tasks assigned for each side; this allows for a high degree of differentiation of activities, since the tasks on the different cubes may be differentiated according to readiness, learning profile or interest.

Applying the cubing method may end with a frontal activity presenting the correct way/ways of solving each task.

*Application: Topic – Stereotypes and elimination of stereotypes*

*Materials:* audio-video recording showing a situation in which a Roma child is discriminated at school;

*Methodological guidelines:*

The tasks for the 6 sides of the cube are:

1. Describe – Describe the physical tricks and clothing of the discriminated character X.
2. Compare – Compare the attitudes of characters Y and Z towards the character X. What do you notice?
3. Associate – What does the answer of character X make you think about?
4. Analyse – Analyse how character X behaves in school every day.
5. Apply – If you were the teacher of that class, what measures would you apply to reduce / eliminate discrimination against character X?
6. Argue for/against – Argue for/against the decision made by the teacher following the incident presented in the video.

*SWOT analysis for the cubing method*

*Strengths*

The Cubing method:

- stimulates the student's thinking; develops the ability to analyse and summarize;
- diminishes the shortcomings of individualized learning; promotes interaction among participants, encouraging those who do not have a high level of knowledge;
- provides students with the opportunity to develop the skills needed for complex approaches;
- develops communication skills;
- involves several types of competencies (speaking, writing, listening, reading);
- it does not restrict the expression of opinions or individual views;
- expands the views on the topic;
- immediate feedback;
- implies exploring a topic from multiple perspectives, allowing the usage of a complex and integrative approach.

*Weaknesses*

- low efficiency in large groups;
- may create class management problems;
- it is a time-consuming method.

*Opportunities*

- sends concrete facts to a broad group;
- stimulates creativity;

- participants can work together to find answers;
- raises students' awareness of their own attitudes;
- helps students develop their autonomy;
- can activate all the students in the class.

#### *Threats*

- students may easily disengage from the activity.

#### **Conclusions**

Our research aims to support a module of Intercultural Education centred on tolerance values for students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year at various specializations and faculties from "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacau with the aim of identifying and measuring the possible changes in their tolerant, anti-discriminatory attitude. To this end, we intend to apply a pre-test and post-test (a Likert type scale for identifying and measuring tolerant / anti-discriminatory attitudes) and compare the results obtained before and after the students' study of the module of Education intercultural skills described above.

The main hypothesis is that following the intercultural education module, the tolerant and non-discriminatory attitude of the students will change in the positive sense: they will increase their desire for intercultural knowledge and their level of acceptance of the diversity and difference that define people of different ethnicities, nationalities, religions, etc. The intercultural education module is also addressed to students who attend the initial program of psycho-pedagogical training for the teaching career because they are potential future teachers who will also promote an open and tolerant attitude among their students, through the model of behaviour and attitude they will provide themselves.

Also, the intention is to concretize the results of our research into a good practice guide to achieving intercultural education that includes methodological and content suggestions focused on the development of a tolerant, anti-discriminatory attitude.

Our research at the level of the scientific literature and the regulatory documents of the Romanian education system allows us to formulate the following conclusions:

- the intercultural education discipline has no compulsory status in any country, although foreign and Romanian authors emphasize the necessity of introducing it as a compulsory discipline for reducing / eliminating discrimination of any kind;
- both foreign and Romanian authors underline the potential of intercultural education in promoting tolerance, with the aim of reducing / eliminating conflicts and situations of discrimination of any kind;
- the values most often associated with tolerance are respect and mutual help/support/solidarity, according to the literature studied;
- we could not identify a scale to measure attitudes that are in full compliance with our research goals; it will have to be compounded by combining and adapting items in existing scales of tolerant / non-discriminatory attitude;
- the literature presents the social determinations of education for tolerance in the contemporary world, both at the level of the educational context and at the level of the sociocultural factors, emphasizing the importance of the scientific foundation of education for tolerance as a new challenge of education [21, 22].

Examining the national curriculum for pre-university education, we note the shortcomings of the learning outcomes and contents of tolerance education, therefore, there is a clear need to develop a module on this dimension of education in a multicultural society.

There are optional courses in university education, only in some Romanian universities, that represent both a starting point in developing an intercultural education module focused on tolerance as a key value, as well as a confirmation of the certainty of the need for intercultural education in an increasingly globalized, globalizing and diverse world, which must, however, stand together and remove conflicts in a constructive way in order to evolve.

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