Intercultural education - Analysis and Perspectives

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Abstract

Education prospect of opening multiple values is a step towards fully justified since they are best individual insertion in a polymorphic and dynamic spiritual world. This approach formative meets the aspirations of both the individual by valuing some particular, unique trait that deserves to be recognized or amplified, and the profit of the company, ensuring a degree of coherence, solidarity and functionality. A culture is high not only in itself, through its own (self)contemplative or (self)reproductive mechanisms but also the "metabolism" of growth and its transformation. The main objective of intercultural education consists of preparing people to perceive, accept, respect and experience otherness. The aim is smoothing the *land* of meeting with the other. Intercultural education aims at developing education for all in the spirit of recognizing the differences that exist within the same society and refers less to achieve education for different cultures, implying staticism and isolation of cultural groups. Intercultural education favors interaction and dialogue, the courage to come out of oneself and the desire in the other's projection. The main empirical data collection methods that are used in this paper are: observation and social documents analysis. Style research approach uses both qualitative and quantitative perspective. Quantitative research highlights the numerical measurements of specific aspects of the phenomena studied with the aim of testing causal hypotheses whereas qualitative research paradigms are based on a kind of postmodern, post-rationalist or post-positivist views. This paper, presents some of the theoretical considerations on the development of intercultural education in Romania as well as offering a global perspective. Although Romania, as in fact the entire Balkan area, has always been an ethnic and cultural mosaic, the concern for intercultural education is recent, considering politics practiced by the regime, which was one social, ethnic and cultural leveling despite

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discursive affirmation of equality between Romanian and "nationalities". Thus, intercultural education history, or at least the commitment to inter-culturalism. After 1989, Romania's ethnic minorities have assumed an active role in affirming their cultural identity different from that of the majority. This paper aims to outline a picture of contemporary intercultural education through a general analysis and point some prospects regarding this subject.

Keywords: *Inter-culturalism, perspective of education, ethnicity, diversity, openness*

I. INTRODUCTION
Present European companies are coexistence arenas with the other not only on an ethnic and cultural level in a multi-national environment but also in terms of identities and interests of individuals where otherness is more obvious and increasingly vocal. In these circumstances, it is imperative that those undergoing socialization generations learn basic skills to enable peaceful coexistence with groups whether the difference is ethnic identity, cultural background or personal interests. Intercultural education promotes a certain type of dynamic, cognitive student. It's about learning a movement away from the center where they represent their own culture and its own rules, outwardly, to be able to look to the values of otherness, as far as possible from the viewpoint of the other. This principle seems difficult in practice, given that any individual is the product of their own culture. From this point of view, there is no possibility of a state of *tabula rasa* by which one can "get rid of" his or her fully internalized values through education. However, what brings intercultural education in the process of learning the relativity of values is its openness to otherness so you can understand in terms of the other's values.

This relativistic view of values must be achieved in an environment of continuous and mutual interaction, where value judgments are removed, the difference is no longer stigmatized, and rather the attention is focused on what individuals have in common. This allows people to use the same language, understanding and mutual valorization. Thus, intercultural education is not only for the minority, but also for the majority of the

members of society who also have the same duty of relativizing their own values, combating value judgments and stigmatization. Intercultural education promotes a constant dialogue on an equal footing.

2. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION
2.1. Objectives and Principles
Intercultural education corresponds to *the third pillar* of education: learning to live with others. International Commission for the XXI Century Education emphasizes this component of education as a vital one in developing a harmonious society. This column refers to learning to live with others, "through developing knowledge of the other, its history, its traditions and spirituality" (Delors, J., 1996).

The general objective of education is to *facilitate intercultural learning* for living together in a plural society today. More specifically, the objectives of intercultural education and its several axes are, primarily, the acquisition of knowledge in the field of culture in general and in particular including its impact on the behavior of individuals and groups. This way the reflection on the person's own culture precedes the reflection on cultural otherness.

This first objective facilitates the person on the second, namely the *awareness* of the causes and roots of his or her cultural determinations, stereotypes, prejudices, and to identify them in others. With this awareness, intercultural education aims to build the ability to relativize perspectives and viewpoints, and to develop communication skills with others. The third objective is the formation of positive attitudes to be implemented in a plural society: *respect for diversity*, for the identity of those perceived as different, and thus rejection of intolerance and discriminatory attitudes towards them. The fourth objective of intercultural education is *stimulating active participation* within the meaning of the principles of pluralist society and combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination from any point of view.

Intercultural education involves a **set of basic principles** (Meunier O., 2007): First, *heterogeneity is considered a norm* (as that term was derived from the concept of "normality") and not a disability requiring additional support. This diversity as a rejection of ethnic homogeneity, cultural

identity and interests is the negation of totalitarianism and a means of ensuring democratic and open society values. At the same time, intercultural education is not a way to level or to compensate for inequalities, but a means of acquiring equal skill.

Another principle of intercultural education is the idea that *individuals and groups they belong* implicitly undergo a permanent process of crossbreeding which produces a continued diversity. We may note here the convergence of this principle with the constructivist perceptions concept of culture according to which every culture is changing its permeability due to influences from outside. In the moment of accepting the idea of a permanent dynamic of any culture, the essentialist prejudices and rigid stereotypes are most vulnerable and easily dismantled.

One of the debates on intercultural education (in fact "multicultural" because debate ranged in the 80s in the UK), refers to the perceived dichotomy between the antiracist, multicultural education and education (Fyfe, A., 1993). In fact, Fyfe shows that the debate is sterile, and counterproductive, since the principles of education as those listed above, labeling preached the kind of education is secondary purpose to promote human rights principles through education. Thus, antiracist education and the multicultural components reinforce each other and are essentially the one and only trend of different political orientations. Similarly, we can assert that multicultural education is perceived to be the liberal whereas the antiracist is seen as radical and militant in character, i.e., more violent and more direct) (Robin Grinter quoted Fyfe, 1993).

2.2. Dimensions factors, processes

Intercultural education is an «integrated concept» **(**Nedelcu, A., 2008) that is exhibited in several dimensions, and involving a multitude of actors through a number of processes. In what follows, therefore, we operationalize the concept and outline the elements that are needed in order to reach to a deep understanding of intercultural education.

a. Dimensions of intercultural education

Many authors who have studied intercultural education conceptualized different system processes which one engages during the practical application of intercultural education. For analytical simplicity, we preferred to refer in the first instance to two major dimensions of intercultural education. Applying the principles involves respect for diversity and equity simultaneously (Batelaan, P., 2003) and it is based on both the content and the pedagogical processes of these two axes during the practice of intercultural education.

The size of diversity is the first axis where stands the contents of intercultural education. In accordance with the principles listed above in intercultural education, interest in mirroring the diversity manifests itself in many directions. In the first instance, it is about playing the social reality as composed of various components (groups, individuals, interests ...).

Student awareness in this plural reality is a *sine qua non* for an effective approach to intercultural education concepts. As such, it supports the idea that the entire educational curriculum should reflect the plurality of views, the default of the diversity and the otherness will later become intelligible. From the perspective of intercultural education, the reality must be shown from different angles, thus enabling the coexistence and reflecting the real diversity of views in a pluralistic society.

The second dimension of intercultural education refers to *equity.* Closely related to the first dimension of *diversity*, equity stakes a major axis which is the understanding that other viewpoints are equally valid and perhaps as "right" as their own perspective, once the criteria are evaluated using the "other" perspective. Thus, teaching practice should focus on valuing "different" views with as much legitimacy as the personal perception. It is, about the implementation of the principles of cultural relativism, but the micro-level of individual thinking.

This dimension of intercultural education also involves addressing human rights concepts (for all individuals are born equal), and awareness of students regarding the practices of intolerance, discrimination and racism, which are contrary to human rights principles.

When applying these principles with the students, it is essential in the first instance that they be respected by teachers in the classroom as well as in school. Thus, equity of access to educational resources, participation in educational act, and equity (Batelaan, P., 2003) expectations of school performance and children's skills are conditions that the student will not easily realize the need to comply, in turn, the principle of equity. For the deepening of the concept, it is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of the factors and processes that intercultural education has implemented in teaching practice.

b. Factors involved in intercultural education

Factors that come into play in the implementation of intercultural education can be divided in order to structure the analysis, on several levels. Thus, the public policies developed by the Ministry of Education are at the *macro* level of intercultural intervention. The education measures designed to implement intercultural education should promote equity and respect for diversity, principles of human rights education in preventing and combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination of any kind, marginalization and social exclusion. In general, research and the experiences gained from previous projects have shown that politically considering minorities as equal dialogue partners is a *sine qua non* prerequisite of the application of a policy of inter-culturalism in education (Intercultural Institute, EURROM, 2000).

In intercultural education methodology documents may crystallize the policy-making efforts of the Ministry of Education in this area. At the same time, our approach will reveal critical, in addition to the positive aspects of these attempts, which, from our point of view, is their shortcomings in implementing the principles of intercultural education. At an average level, there is a school institution whose purpose is to implement policies at the macro level, a student-friendly environment which also promotes values of those policies. The role of the school can be closely analyzed in terms of

intercultural education. Thus, Batelaan P. suggests that the important role of the school is to promote dialogue, and in this function, the school must take certain missions in applying the principles of intercultural education. These essentially relate to preparing students to participate in dialogues through practicing it as a pedagogical method, but also as a standalone objective of education. The dialogue should be applied not only in the classroom between teachers and students or between students but also between the school and the community (Batelaan, P., 2003).

On the border between the average educational institution and the *micro* – student thinking, is one of the key factors in applying intercultural education, namely **the teacher**. The role of teacher's internalization of the principles of intercultural education by students is crucial, but its definition depends on the type of pedagogy assumed by the teacher. Traditional pedagogies require omniscient teacher attitude, above the pupil. The latter remains stuck in the role of passive recipient of knowledge that cannot be ignored questioned. This type of interaction teacher - student happens especially when traditional pedagogy of transmission (Chevalier, J., 2002).

In the constructivist pedagogy, the teacher is more of a "facilitator" (Ladson-Billings, G., 1995) a learnt "cultural mediator" (Bârlogeanu, L., 2002), a "moderator of dialogues" (Nedelcu, A., 2008). This role brings to mind the pedagogical method that "student learning is driven by its own reflection object using dialogue and communication" (Socrates). Instructional design models the duties of the teacher so that it is no longer the main source of information, but only one of the resources that students can use in learning, stimulate dialogue among students, encourage autonomy in the student in the sense of empowerment and develop critical thinking skills.

On the final level of analytical factors that are involved in intercultural education is located **the student**. Theory on intercultural education deals with this point only marginally. However, it seems important to emphasize the need for clarification regarding the student's role in intercultural education activities. As the teacher's role is shaped by the principles of constructivist pedagogy, as in a mirror, the role of the student is determined in the same frame. Students should therefore be encouraged to take steps

towards an active, thoughtful, constructive and critical interaction with the teacher and make dialogues with other students. Also, in order to take part in the activities of intercultural education effectively, the student should feel valued in his or her own cultural, ethnic and religious identity. It is obvious that if the student is subjected to discriminatory attitudes, reaction to reflection on one's own culture can give adverse results due to internalized inferiority complex that is suffered under the action of discrimination.

A final factor that can intervene in a crucial way in the intercultural education is the **parents.** They play a decisive role in generating beliefs and attitudes of children, and as such can influence - positive or negative - skills that endorse intercultural education courses. Stereotypes of parents are transmitted to their children and may prove difficult to remove since they can be restored in the family after being demolished during intercultural education courses. Internal conflict may occur when the student receives a set of guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of surrounding reality at home and school and cultural education courses try to uproot these images and stereotypes the student has received. Then the role of the intercultural education is much more difficult, and it becomes apparent that the processes of intercultural education are strongly influenced by the social environment in which they occur.

In fact, all of these factors are subject to influences from the social environment they belong. It is indeed difficult to imagine an effective intercultural education that achieves its purpose in a society where just the values that underpin it are missing - or are rare -. However, this is precisely the "utopia" says Jacques Delors in the Report of the International Commission on Education XXI Century: a necessary utopia, a "utopia vital to exit the dangerous circle fed with cynicism and resignation." (Delors, J. 1996)

c. Intercultural education as a process
As it suggests intercultural education goals and puts them on a scale from "Reflection to Action" intercultural education happens to be a process. As such, it requires evaluation of the initial stage and a final objective to be pursued continuously. Milton J. Bennett conceptualized

six stages of intercultural learning that can be helpful for an analysis of intercultural education as a process. Like any analytical and conceptual scheme, Bennett's model is not a reflection of reality, but a schematic crystallization thereof; in fact, the early stage can be at another level than the described first stage, and intercultural education course may have to return to previous stages that turn out not to be completely outdated. In what follows, we will expose the six stages, which were conceptualized by Bennett who proved to be a good starting point for the development of cultural sensitivity. (Gillert A., 2003)

These six stages can be divided into two distinct phases. The first is *ethnocentrism,* as a starting point, and the second is *ethnorelativism,* the objective of learning intercultural education. (J. M. Bennett, 1993)

The ethnocentric stages begin with a situation of denial of the existence of other perspectives on reality, and translates the fact of otherness through isolation or through lack of contact with other groups or by refusal and segregation of groups perceived as different. Bennett adds distinction between the majority groups that can pass through the stage of denial and the minority who are constantly confronted with the otherness of the majority and therefore cannot deny that they are perceived as different by them.

The second stage of Bennett's reaction is defense. The difference from other groups may be perceived as a threat since the uniqueness of their vision can be questioned, and hence the possession of absolute truth. One of the strategies to face this stage of manufacture is perceived as negative stereotypes about different groups, which can very quickly lead to racist attitudes. Own cognitive mechanism of this stage is the perception of positive examples of their group as a rule, and conceptualizing positive examples of different group as an exception. (Guillaumin C., 2002)

An interesting form to face this stage is what Bennett called the "cancellation" i.e. different perception of culture as superior or own group and own culture. In practice, this strategy is only replacing the "center of ethnocentrism" of an individual with another cultural landmark, and as such, does not exceed ethnocentric stage.

Bennett labeled the third stage as the *ethnocentric stage* in order to minimize the accentuation differences of universal characteristics and that the ignorance of the cultures or groups differ in favor of highlighting the common grounds between groups and cultures. This universalism cannot help but create a deep understanding of otherness since the differences are ignored. Bennett described this stage, however, we want to add that what generates profound lack of understanding of cultural otherness itself is not ignoring differences, but the mechanisms by which they are actively built and negotiated by those involved in the intercultural contact. This idea, particularly prolific in theories of ethnic relations - and thus intercultural - comes from the constructivist current conceptualization of ethnic identity formation mechanisms, initiated in the 70s by Fredrik Barth (Barth, F. 1969). This constructivist theory avoids essentiality of the risk of cultural differences and distinctions to be viewed as rigid, static and permanent. To be precise, this dynamic culture involves definition of "differences" and how they continue to be influenced by external factors.

In our opinion, some theorists of interethnic and intercultural relations - including Bennett - put too little emphasis on the dynamism of cultural characteristics, and implicitly highlight the mechanisms of constructing imaginary borders between groups who perceive themselves as different. In the same tradition constructivist theory is another very prolific theory in turn, by Benedict Andersen, and namely the idea of going beyond the local communities (ethnic nations, "races", crops, etc.) that are in fact communities "imagined". The theory puts the emphasis on what unites those individuals (ethnicity, nationality, physical characteristics or cultural) while completely ignoring issues which can differentiate and divide them even more than what unites (Anderson, B., 1983). Therefore, important differences are not included in ethnic or cultural groups, rather they are considered as ways of producing differences within ethnic and intercultural relations.

With the fourth stage conceptualized by Bennett, enters the stage the ethno-relativism assuming the idea that cultures can only be understood by one another and the culturally determined behaviors should be placed in their historical context to be really understood. For Bennett, ethno-relativism begins with the acceptance of cultural differences, with the belief that all

deserve respect differences, including differing worldview. This stage involves, first of all, understanding and accepting that people's values are social and cultural constructions built in order to organize the surrounding reality, and not absolute truths.

The fifth stage is described by Bennett as adaptation which follows the logical acceptance of the cultural difference. The acceptance of difference inevitably induces a new vision of the world; from the moment values cease to be absolute truths. The whole system of perception of the world must therefore be adapted to this new perspective and its implications. Adaptation takes place by producing new behaviors, new communication styles, suitable ideas that deserve respect and other values. This idea is based on the feeling of empathy with each other, without which there can be no genuine understanding and its realities and perspectives induced by them. In intercultural education, development of empathy is an essential stage.

This stage is crucial in the transformation of a company to a truly open society which embodies the principles of intercultural dialogue in concrete communication practices between groups and individuals perceived as different. Of course, even if all the individuals of a society adopts the values of intercultural education, respect otherness and actively combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, it is important that these principles become more of a social norm than an exception to the "enlightened".

Finally, the last stage of Bennett is called *integration*, a term quite unfortunate, given the possible confusion with the term that has circulated numerous national policies as the "integration" of minorities, in particular with reference to minorities resulting from migration processes. For Bennett, it is a case of trying to integrate the various individual perspectives acknowledged, understood and assumed, in one frame of reference based on individual experiences that are lived. It is, to a certain degree, the passage of the universal differences through a sieve of cultural conceptions of individuality and crystallization life. For Bennett, at this stage, there is the risk of "not belonging to any culture." It can be attributed to Bennett's ignoring the fact that the selection of individual at this stage is largely produced still in a defined cultural framework, and that eventually all

individuals are still being determined - in more or less - culturally. Finally, the inter-culturalism, despite the fact that it is extremely desirable in social terms, remains a cultural phenomenon in itself. An argument in support of this idea can be glimpsed in the fact that inter-culturalism seems to be largely over - and therefore a product of- Western societies where there were major migratory movements.

3. INTERCULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

"Intercultural" psychology research directly studies the interaction between individuals and groups of different cultural origins. There is still much debate over the use of terms in English and French and the importance of the method. At first, intercultural psychology had an aspect of comparative study of formal structures in front of different values (intended as "ethical"). Some researchers have tried to favor an "Emic" approach (emic = relating to or denoting an approach to the study or description of a particular language or culture in terms of its internal elements and their functioning rather than in terms of any existing external scheme) sometimes going up to a total cultural relativism, which rejects any comparison. Between the two approaches there is opposition, but complementary approach the most pertinent being the student of both what is common (universal) and what is different in different cultural events.

Another perspective is based on the transition from studies that directly compare those groups or individuals in contact, especially in situations of emigration. In the Francophone world, the distinguished team of Toulouse (Clanet, 1990), for instance, uses nouns *intercultural* and *inter-culturalism*, the latter being defined as "a set of processes through which individuals and groups interact as parts of two or more assemblies that require different cultures". The distinctive note of intercultural psychology, according to some researchers, is to establish links between the social and the psychic. This is the main idea underlying the conceptual framework "cross-cultural" (Berry et al, 1992; Segall et al, 1990).

Here Camilleri explains these "reciprocity of perspectives" between the individual and the social as: beyond the social psyche, the collective transcends the individual, but the psyche, individuals themselves are the ones who develop these formations whereby "They are overwhelmed" and that they perceive as transcendent; psychology has the capacity to locate, describe and analyze the subjective constitution operations beyond subjective; she appropriates thus a number of realities - and culture among them - which do not come from a mysterious framework, but are present case (Camilleri C., 1990). Dasen defines intercultural psychology as "the study of the influence of culture on human behavior; it is, therefore, an individual studying psychology in its context" (Dasen, P., 1993). In developmental psychology, for example, an intercultural approach to decoupling factors that blend in an "inside-cultural" research such as chronological age and schooling. Intercultural psychology allows, especially, "a look back" on our own society and its institutions, of our own enculturation. It also helps to explain the processes of ethnocentrism and how to overcome it.

4. HISTORY OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

Although Romania, in fact the entire Balkan area, has always been an ethnic and cultural mosaic, the concern for intercultural education is recent. For instance, Anca Nedelcu records that "in 1841, *Gazeta de Transilvania* reported a total of 1,260 schools fully Hungarian or wholly Romanian (962 Hungarian schools, 298 Romanian) and only 13 mixed schools, which represents only 1% of all schools where interethnic and intercultural (with emphasis on the use of the conditional-opted because there is no certainty that educational policy was, at that time, one for intercultural dialogue) contact can be promoted" (Nedelcu, A., 2008).

Naturally, the policy practiced by the communist regime was a social, ethnic and cultural leveling, despite the discursive affirmation of equality between Romanian and "nationalities". Thus, intercultural education history, or at least the commitment to inter-culturalism, shows us that there exists a corresponding vacuum when compared to the communist period. After 1989, Romania's ethnic minorities have assumed an active role in affirming the identity of their culture being different from that of the majority. The political objective of the recognition of the minority status

was to protect them in national policies. In education, an important step has established the *Education Law of 18th June, 1995* and subsequently amended, which stipulates the right of minorities to study the entire school curriculum in their *native language*, under certain conditions.

In parallel with this regulation, there is also a department for education in minority languages within the Ministry of Education; a network of education units and sections with classes set up in Hungarian and German. Despite this concern for the cultural protection of ethnic minorities and ensuring legislative framework and the cultivation of their identity, Romania still lacks the idea of promoting inter-culturalism in education in the 90s. Towards the late 90s, civil society initiatives were trying to fill this void by implementing projects with intercultural education. This is the case par excellence of the Intercultural Institute from Timişoara, a true pioneer in the field of inter-culturalism in Romania.

(www.intercultural.ro/eng/about/projects.html#eduschoolroma, accessed February 2017)

The first project of intercultural education implemented by IIT (Intercultural Institute Timoşoara) in partnership with *Romani CRISS, Institute of Education Sciences, GREF France* and *Centre de Recherches Tsiganes Paris*, was to organize training seminars for teachers who are working with *Roma(gypsies)* children. The project was called "*Educating children from Roma communities: training of teachers working with Roma children*" and was conducted between June 1996 and January 1998. One of the project objectives was to improve relations between the school and Roma communities. This initiative was followed by the project EURROM that targeted "integration of Roma culture in school education and extracurricular" between 1998 and 2001. In the first year of the project, teachers from a network of schools attended Roma children activities to discover social environment and local history by carrying out interviews with the community members in order to identify the elements that are culture-specific and integrate them into education. Based on the experience gained in the course of the second year, a methodological guide

was developed for teachers working with Roma pupils. In the third year, the implementation methodology that is developed in initial and continuing training programs for teachers was observed particularly. In 1999-2000, IIT implemented a new project in schools in intercultural education. The project, called *"Intercultural education in multiethnic schools"* and funded by the European Cultural Foundation, was developed in collaboration with the *Foundation for Human Rights* and *Peace Education* in Budapest. The project "aims to introduce methods of cultural education in multiethnic schools" from Timis county. The project was followed by an initiative of the same name, but on a large scale in the regions Banat, Moldavia and Transylvania (www.intercultural.ro/eng/about/projects.html#eduschoolroma, February 2017).

Despite the aforementioned initiatives, such space existed in civil society in Romania during the 2000s, the critical approach of Kenneth Cushner indicates the persistence of what he called "fear of inter-culturalism" as well as the mono-cultural identity and tradition type (Cushner, K. 1998). Mono-culturalism stands out preventing penetration of the new principles of intercultural education in Romanian schools. Also stands out from the text of the program and suggestions presented methodological focus the transmission of content, rather own a traditional pedagogy, and not learning organization around dialogue, as it uses the constructivist pedagogy type. A traditional pedagogy is not suitable for interactive features of the learning object if intercultural education, and can question the effectiveness of a traditional pedagogical approach to the teaching of this subject.

5. LIMITS OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

Besides the shortcomings that we have outlined in the previous paragraph, if the optional curriculum materials designed for intercultural education are considered, it seems to hit obstacles further, the education system to the wider Romanian society and public policies. In terms of formal education, the current context where predominates a mono-cultural approach and a one-sided perspective on the history and culture of the majority, rarely refers to cultural, ethnic and religious minorities. Eloquent in this regard are the materials used in the common core curriculum requirements, particularly those relating to Romanian language and literature subjects and Romanian history (Miroiu A., 1998).

To illustrate this situation, a critical discussion that we find very pertinent by Constantin Cucos and Teodor Cozma on addressing dimensional, rigid and stereotyped Turkish-Romanian conflict in the history that is taught in schools (Cucoş C., T. Cozma, 2001). Thus, the prospect of addressing these wars is unilateral and anchored in the lexical field of "enmity" with no concern for play diversity of viewpoints, there is a perspective of the "enemy" and the possibility of a dialogue with him. Similarly, Anca Nedelcu almost exclusively uses first names in typical Romanian textbooks (Nedelcu A., 2008). The principles of intercultural education should be applied to the entire curriculum, transversely, on all levels and in all subjects. For example, children from second grade teaches that Turks or the Hungarians as "enemies", "invaders" of the country - as a vision from the perspective of history of the peoples, it will be harder for students in the later stages of education to internalize the need for dialogue with those people as the printed image of textbooks is negative, which discourages dialogue from the start.

Another drawback is the implementation of intercultural education, limited in the format of optional subjects, its approach may remain superficial. Moreover, limiting it to the secondary level may mean that the intervention of the student's personality formation occurs at a stage rather delayed, which could hinder internalization of the principles preached by intercultural education. An early intervention in primary grades intensifies the approach by increasing the number of hours allocated to the matter, which can produce a more lasting effect. Another idea in this matter could be switching the courses from being optional to mandatory at the same level as civic education. These measures would make intervention more efficient, more sustainable and higher chances of success in terms of internalization of the principles of intercultural education.

At the level of public policies on inter-culturalism, the action taken by authorities in this regard is rather tentative. All this leads to a worrying state of affairs regarding the application of the principles of intercultural education in schools in Romania.

This paper aims to present, in addition to highlighting the obstacles facing the process of putting intercultural education into practice, and identify some of the best practices that can help accelerate and streamline the implementation of intercultural education in Romanian schools.

6. CONTEMPORARY AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

The challenges of a contemporary world include numerous discriminations (racism, apartheid, sexism), people's desire for self-determination and understanding, poverty and hunger, international terrorism, religious intolerance, fundamentalism, trafficking in persons and drugs, new forms of racism and ethnic cleansing, environmental pollution and disarmament.

Contemporary education faces challenges around contemporary world issues that also develops peculiar reverberations is the field of education:

- The universal character - no country or region can be placed outside of this issue;

- The global nature - affecting all sectors of social life;

- Rapid and unpredictable evolution - people are faced with complex situations for which no suitable approaches or solutions are available;

- Multidisciplinary character;

- The urgency - to solve problems that need prompt answers, ingenuity and important financial efforts (Cucos, C., Cozma, T., 2001).

Faced with these imperatives, education leaders from different countries are placed in two different positions. From a sceptic perspective, the school is seen with declining educational systems that are no longer able to prepare tomorrow's world. From the perspective of optimistic experts, the school has the resources necessary for setting up the future, but it needs to adapt their educational services to the needs of contemporary world development. The human being is a cultural being and, consequently, is someone who can be educated permeable to cultural contacts, dialogues, influences and idiosyncrasies (Antonesei L., 1996).

Education, defined in terms of a process, signifies a deliberate transformation of a human being, which is positive and long-term, in a final view it is explicitly formulated, developed at the macro structure of society. Changing purposive and creative human nature, education is an individual process; the transformation of humanity both on the basis of the ownership of intellectual culture (humanization) and a social process of transformation of human being on ownership and long-term planning of forces that are essential fixed cultural values (socializing) (Panțuru S. 1995).

Lifelong learning is a principle of integrating all modes of education by a company which is harmoniously composed in a new structure and its objectives are:

- Creation of favorable structures and methods for the training and development of human personality throughout its existence;

- Preparation of human personality for self and self-education (Lengrand P., 1973).

6.1. The dimensions of intercultural education
Although various aspects of education for international understanding are interrelated, the better as they are individualized below:

- Human rights education;

- Education for democracy and civic;

- Education for peace and disarmament;

- Education for tolerance;

- Development education;

- Environmental education;

- Intercultural education.

There are concepts related to the intercultural education such as multiethnic and global education. **Multiethnic education** is a concept that was imposed in countries that are still ethnic conglomerate of the constitution - USA, Canada, Australia. Multiethnic education purposes (Banks, J., A., 1988) are:

- Knowledge of each ethnic group having its own values;

- Familiarity of the ethnic groups with the main elements of the culture of other groups, understanding and respect;

- Facilitating the confrontation of alternative concerns;

- Equip students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to conduct activities in the profession, but also shaping the general culture;

- The reduction of discrimination and segregation in schools and members of ethnic groups in society;

- Border cultural skills development; the menus on five levels: observation, direct contacts with groups or members of ethnic groups, biculturalism, complete socialization and assimilation under a foreign culture.

Along with attempts to define inter-culturalism, in order to avoid confusion and simplifications, Dasen considers the indication of what intercultural education is useful:

1) It is not a compensatory education for foreigners, aimed at settling the problems of children of immigrants. In intercultural vision children have no problems, but the educational establishment has difficulty adapting to cultural diversity. The school must help these children to learn the language of the host country and comply with local school rules to maximize their chances of school and professional success. Cultural differences in performance are not automatically assigned to the cultural gaps or are unfavorable, but are considered a reflection of adaptation to different contexts.

2) Intercultural education is not just another school subject, but a new approach to classical disciplines. The teacher will educate students valuing cultures of origin of students, making them aware of cultural diversity and avoiding stereotypes and presentation in static cultures. At the institutional level, it involves choosing a model of integration rather than assimilation.

3) Intercultural education should not be confused with language courses and culture of origin to immigrant pupils. It is open to all students and should enroll in an approach covering all cycles (Dasen P., 1999).

Directions through education can facilitate the process of modernizing in Romania and thus enable the integration into European structures (Antonesei L., 1996):

a) In the *educational ideal* it is necessary to overcome the phrase loaded formalism of Education Law that the educational ideal of modernity is the free, integral and harmonious human individuality, autonomous formation of personality and creative design strategies and educational actions to transform this goal into reality.

b) The level of *objectives* in education is needed to be drawn from the values of modernity.

c) In the *content*:

- Rethinking the place and share anthropological and social disciplines in all cycles of education, designed to provide graduate knowledge on the issues of modernity values, rights and freedoms, the functions of the state, the European institutions and global operation.

- Studying foreign languages closely related to culture and civilization to which they belong, because language is both a tool with practical utility relations in various fields and vector specificity defining a culture. At the same time, encouraging the knowledge / study of the languages in close vicinity (micro and macro complex - administrative, geographic etc.) will make the non-native language appear as friends and not enemies, taking into consideration that we do not love what we do not know (*Ignotos nulla cupido*) (education Act, art. 31).

- Promoting comparative studies in fields such as history and literature for understanding the relationship between the universal and the particular on one hand, and for enabling the change of perspective and discourage ethnocentric approach, on the other hand.

As for the level of trainers, it is necessary to retrain teachers in the spirit of European values, less equity dominated by formalism, as the improvement in cooperation with academic institutions outside the Romanian (scholarships, internships MA and PhD research projects and joint intervention). Such external contacts have an intake explicit nature

informative professional direction, but also an implicit formative effect due to direct contact, uncensored and unadulterated with another culture. The universities occupying a vanguard position can train the trainers. As a result of the irradiation of cultural function performed by such Universities, now other competent agents become confident enough to disseminate the values of European modernity.

6.2. The objectives of intercultural education
The purpose of international education, the superordinate of the concept of intercultural is to develop the sense of social responsibility and solidarity with disadvantaged groups and induce respect for the principle of equality in everyday behavior (Rey, M., 1974).

Intercultural education enables structuring open cultural identities (Cucoş C., 2001), its targets are:

- Guiding young people to assimilate a culture anthropological perspective;

- Understanding another's point of view by relativistic positioning;

- Legitimizing cultural identity, hindering sacred;

- Ensuring respect for differences, but in systems of mutual attitudes.

Rey proposes high goals for the generality of intercultural education designed to help overcoming ethnocentrism by empowering the individual:

- To ask questions confidently on individuality, sociological, mono-cultural or ethnocentric and regulations;

- To transform images and stereotypical representations and overcome prejudices generating judgments and actions;

- To transform and diversify power relationships and make room for equality for individuals who are deprecated, as skills, cultural references and their own ways of expression;

- To promote joined up, recognizing the complexity and relationships between cultures, social classes, institutions, educational levels, school disciplines, scientific objects, and between human beings regardless of age, language, ethnicity, culture or religion;

- To learn and develop negotiation and communication between individuals, groups or communities and make them beneficial for every party;

- Articulate the responsibilities of every one in relation to local and national communities, and by reporting to the international community (Rey M., 1991).

Major and generic goals of intercultural education at school level:

- *Preserving and defending cultural diversity* - school, transmitting values that court will focus on the plurality of cultures; should not establish the primacy of culture over another (Cucoş C., 2001).

- *Formation of intercultural competences of citizens.*

An intercultural process which features a dynamic and continuous process of forming behaviors must be emphasized. Intercultural education should continue to be refined throughout one's life rather than ending in school.

Intercultural behaviors (Cucoş C., 2001):
1. Availability to know.

2. Acceptance of otherness from a neutral perspective. Most often, the other is perceived as being similar, and thus supported or antagonism, and therefore rejected.

3. The ability to perceive what is foreign in a relieved manner and flexible scales reading by rigid denying, simplistic and levelers, which have the advantage of being familiar and easy to use, but impoverish the reality of many of its dimensions.

4. Experiencing ambivalent situations without fear, as a prerequisite for acceptance of otherness.

5. Domination and fear of another's defeat. The ability to question and reformulate its own rules. Socio-cultural referential system determines our behavior, and by recognizing the relativity of this system the individual becomes able to improve and adapt so easily.

7. The favorable attitude to experience, existential ways of thinking and different reporting.

8. Ability to assume the conflicts, the third and most positive variation of conduct in case of divergence, the other two being in denial of reality and transforming divergence hostility. Conflicts must be solved calmly and negotiated in a *win-win* approach.

9. The ability to gain broader identities (the European citizen of the world) developing a new type of loyalty, where national, regional, professional and social identities are integrated.

6.3. Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication can be defined as "the ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally with individuals from other cultures so that all individuals participating in the communication encode and decode messages conveyed and avoid possible interpretations and assessments are incorrect" (Michael Hinner, 1998).

Communication between cultures is difficult if we consider its component elements. Culture is represented as an iceberg, the visible being determined by language, architecture, etc., and the invisible having the most powerful and defining elements, which are less visible: social norms, values, conceptions of time and space, self-concept, etc.

Yoshikawa (1987) classified Intercultural Communication into four types:

- *Type of ethnocentric* - (Having two cultures, A and B, culture B will always be a shadow of culture A. Culture B has uniqueness and differentiation which is ignored. Communication is in one direction and feedback does not exist).

- *Type of control* - (Recognizing the unique elements of culture B, but manipulating them to achieve the goals and objectives of culture A.)

- *Type of dialectic* - (communication module has three potential dialectical finalities:

a. Culture A meets opposite theses and transcends culture B and C in a new culture;

b. Culture A is dissolving in culture B, becoming a part of the culture B;

c. Culture B becomes a part of the culture A.

All those purposes are based on the fusion-based communication.)

- *Type dialogued* - (cultures A and B are distinct, independent, they communicate and interrelate, but every culture retains its integrity). Dialogical communication model is considered the most effective way to understand, appreciate and respect diversity.

A conception by Koester, "intercultural communication brings together two aspects; on the one hand the preservation and conservation of certain elements, on the other hand adapting, changing to other crops which involves developing certain cultural and intercultural skills" (Apud.Cucoş, 2000).

Intercultural competence is defined by Kim as "an ability to mobilize knowledge, methods of action, emotional experiences in the context of intercultural interactions" (Apud Cucoş, 2000). Intercultural competence and flexibility means adapting to the new situation of the person and not rigidity, intolerance and monotony. Intercultural competence is not sufficient to achieve effective communication, but bear in mind the context in which the communication takes place. In terms of teaching communication in an intercultural situation, the teacher is leading the communication and should be aware of the mechanisms that can lead to distortion or even conflict both among pupils and for himself. One of the demands of vocational teacher training is intercultural skills.

Long inertia, traditionalist and conservative education assumes responsibility today to trace maps of a world in constant motion, and to provide people guidance tools that help them find their own way (Delors J., 2000). Following those assumptions have occurred in education, educational theories and practices that reflect societal changes and the existential paradigm of postmodern person. Among these is the intercultural education, which supports and cultivates active tolerance

between cultures, plural coexistence and spiritual pluralism. In an attempt to overcome the limits of traditional education and to meet some facts: multicultural European society, a planetary culture, but also social "dis-culturalism", school comes with a "blast" again – inter-culturalism.

Inter-culturalism is a new approach to a social reality which involves placing a philosophy of cultural pluralism in teaching humanities, covering all areas of life. Currently, inter-culturalism requires a factorial analysis of contemporary reality, complex and fluid, seconded by a philosophical hermeneutics, intercultural phenomenon linked to the need of conceptualization.

Inter-culturalism brings with it a new array of communication, involving an opening in interpersonal and social communication to cultural communication. The latter involves the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and values system, cultivation of tolerance, openness and affordability to diversity.

Intercultural education involves, on the one hand ensuring an authentic communication with the individual and get acquainted with their cultural identity, and on the other hand enabling active communication with an alter identity, individual or group as a citizen of Europe and the world. Forming the competence to enter into effective relation with otherness, with the dissolution of their identity involves strengthening critical thinking and cultivating reflexivity to everyday experience, through the conscious process of defining itself by meeting with another. School effectiveness in communication from an intercultural perspective leads to a decrease of certainty and an increase in anxiety related construction of the new otherness scheme of alternative perspectives, more than what is required in an experienced classroom. Willingness to negotiate matters and it is strictly necessary for optimizing intercultural communication. Dialogue through "cultural universals" involves educating cooperative strategies by giving egocentric, ethnocentric, logocentric meanings and by destroying cultural multiplicity by assimilating each other in their own ego.

For individuals to act surprised in front of nuanced dynamics of intercultural communication, the school year should facilitate communication using proactive interception cultivation by knowing each other, and respect the individuality fact of each student. As for the Romanian cultural education in school, it unfolds rather implicit and natural registers, an expression of ideological options, cultural pluralism philosophy, and one political integration in transnational community. It often boils down to a plea for acceptance of diversity, what transpires in school documents and principles of educational reform, but without proper and sustained works.

Curricular dimensions insecurity that derives from the marginal intercultural education, reflected in optional subjects or optional, depending on the individual initiative of the professor insufficiently empowered. Opening curricular policy has facilitated more than inter- and transdisciplinary approaches at the level of optional subjects, and recently introducing the issue in teacher education. Inter-culturalism is a philosophy that emerged in the last 20 years. Now is the time that she can also come to life in school, because it is clearer than ever that "we must give education to identify with a particular culture ..." (Alain Touraine, quoted by Perotti, A., 1998).

7. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION
The training of trainers is a useful recovery of all the research in the field of intercultural pedagogy as well as in the area of cultural anthropology, social psychology, developmental psychology, conflict resolution, management etc.

Continuous training - is targeting all teachers, and this activity can be achieved through training modules in intercultural issues, conducted with the Teaching Staff, in premises of the specialized departments of universities, schools or high schools. The titles of these modules can be diversified and negotiated with teachers, depending on the specific necessities ("Managing minority cultures", "Sizing intercultural curriculum", "Strategies for training communication skills and social participation").

Workshops could bring philosophers, political scientists, sociologists and professionals together with students in science education, to debate topics such as:

- Democracy and Diversity;

- Rights and duties of minorities;

- State and multicultural communities;

- Citizen;

- European integration: opportunities and cultural barriers;

- Avatars of identity preservation;

- New faces of culturo-centrism;

- Awareness and intercultural competence;

- Strategies for intercultural mediation;

- Postmodern and interethnic relations;

- Strategies to overcome ethnocentrism in different school subjects;

- Globalism transnational education and training.

In these workshops, practical exercises can be imagined simulation or experience of inter-culturalism. For example, every teacher can be prescribed to organize and spend a day in style of intercultural interacting and deliberately using stimuli of different cultures (reading various books, speaking foreign languages, meeting people of other ethnicities, preparing a food related to the cuisine of some people, going to a church that belongs to another denomination etc.). In the same purpose, we can be put in a position to analyze our own family tree, identifying multitude of cultural intersections that have predetermined (you might have the surprise to find that our predecessors belonged to minority cultures, ethnic entities etc.).

A virtual intercultural training curriculum should cover a range of topics such as:

- Trends in contemporary society: multicultural, intercultural dynamics;

- Phenomenology of cultural transmission and diffusion;

- Identity and cultural difference. Consequences at school;

- Cultural relativism and perverse in education;

- Filtering social reality through images (categorization, stereotypes, prejudices);

- Diseases of relating to others:

- Discrimination;

- Intolerance;

- Xenophobia;

- Ethnocentrism;

- Racism;

- Sexism;

- Objectives and values of intercultural education;

- Requirements of intercultural and family education;

- Specific activities and intercultural education;

- Strategies of experimental values diversity;

- Formal and informal curricular and extracurricular in intercultural training (Cucoş C., 2011).

CONCLUSIONS

Inter-culturalism; encourages the attitude of intercultural dialogue and paves the way for communication between cultural groups, with beneficial effects on understanding them. Cultivating values such as respect for others, tolerance of diversity, complementarity between values, the school is able to exploit the potential richness of multiculturalism without canceling the identity of any culture.

Inter-culturalism implies recognition of "cultural rights" as an integral part of individual rights. When referring to "cultural rights" do not do this in the intellectual sense of the concept (the right to access knowledge, studying etc.), but as "the right of individuals to possess and develop, possibly jointly with others within a group defined by shared values and traditions, its cultural life, which corresponds to a cultural identity distinct from that of other individuals or groups. "(Mesure S., 1999)

Asserting particular cultural rights involves certain risks. First, there is the possibility that individuals belonging to a particular cultural group to subordinate it, sacrificing personal freedom and possibility to maintain relations with members of other groups. According to the principles of democracy, the individual does not belong to a particular group, isolated from the other company made up of juxtaposed groups which individuals would own, but in people with multiple social roles. The second risk is related to social integration, meaning that it is possible for citizens to retreat to their home communities instead of opening to other groups. In addition, recognition of cultural rights could lead to various political, economic and social differences.

In the process of enculturation that begins in the family and then continues through contact with other forms of culture, children learn prejudices that subsequently become part of the philosophy of life and constitute a filter that will pass only differentiated information consistent with the schemes already formed. Prejudices remain as long as individuals do not have access to comprehensive and authentic information about other people or groups, and contacts are superficial. The main instances that contribute to varying degrees of prejudice are learned and strengthened by the family, the media and the school.

School promotes prejudices through:

• Cultivating a learning environment centered on a single system of values, often at the most encouraging competition to the detriment of cooperation, to the detriment of individual achievement orientation group concerns for the future and much less for the present or past.

• Building the school curriculum (in Europe) in a Eurocentric vision neglecting other cultures of the planet. Similarly, in the United States, attention is focused on the history of Europe and Euro-American culture, ignoring the various cultures of other Americans.

• Ignoring the need for education that aim to reduce ethnic prejudice and sexual discrimination.

Under Romanian law, persons belonging to national minorities are Romanian citizens, expressing free and unhindered membership to a national community, or minors whose parents or other legal representatives also state this membership. National minorities in Romania are the following communities: Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Macedonian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian Lippovan, Roma, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovak, Tatar, Turkish, Ukrainian. Legislation on culture and education was oriented towards protecting the rights of minorities to preserve their national identity through education and culture in their own language, mentioning at the same time, it should not affect the situation of the majority of Romanians, especially learning the national language, Romanian, by all Romanian citizens.

Inter-culturalism enters timidly into Romanian legislation as a solution to simultaneously overcome the social segregation and low level of education among the members of the Roma ethnic minority (in 2001 government adopted a strategy to improve the situation of this ethnic group) and the introduction of teaching in Magyar language (Hungarian ethnic minorities being the majority among ethnics in Romania) in educational institutions.

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