



## INTERCULTURAL AND MEDIA EDUCATION IN TEACHING PRACTICE. AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

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**Abstract.** Both Media Education and Intercultural Education are considered in Romania as a study subject on school and university level, too, in spite of the European Commission's recommendations, which request that these two subjects to be included in other disciplines, and not to be taught as separate ones. In this article we give some theoretical background and practical clarifications for both media and intercultural education, and we present a good practice in this domain, which is a result of a European project.

**Zusammenfassung.** Beide Medien Bildung und Interkulturelle Bildung werden als in Rumänien, wie eine Studie Thema Schul-und Hochschulbereich, zu, trotz der von der Europäischen Kommission Empfehlungen, die verlangen, dass diese zwei Themen, die in anderen Disziplinen, und nicht zu gelehrt als separate werden. In diesem Artikel geben wir einige theoretische Hintergrund und praktische Erläuterungen für beide Medien und interkulturelle Bildung, und wir eine gute Praxis in diesem Bereich, das ist das Ergebnis eines europäischen Projekts.

**Keywords:** intercultural education, media education, ICT in education

### 1. Introduction

In the documents of the Ministry of Education and Research in Romania, Media Education and Intercultural Education are seen as separate disciplines. This perspective can be found in the school practice, too. Thus Intercultural Education was introduced in the school curricula from 2008/2009 school year. Media Education can be found in the curricula only on the university level, and this discipline is addressed to pre-service or in-service teachers. There is no any reference in the Romanian curricula for realizing intercultural education and media education on a transdisciplinary way, how is suggested in the European documents.

### 2. Theoretical background

#### 2.1 Intercultural Education: Conceptual Clarifying

Contemporary society is characterised by a plurality of cultures and by a system of interrelations and interactions through which cultures influence each other. Part of these connections may be described as „intercultural“.

Rey (1986, in Dasen, Perregaux & Rey, 1999) considers that “the term *intercultural* was chosen as a result of the rich sense of the prefix *inter* and of the (anthropologic) sense of the word *culture*. The prefix suggests a process. Thus, when we say intercultural, we implicitly say interaction, exchange, reciprocity, interdependency, and solidarity. Similarly, we say value recognition, recognition of lifestyles, of the symbolic representations to which human beings relate (both individuals or groups in relation to other people) in order to understand the world; recognition of the interactions that appear at a certain moment between the multitude of aspects within one culture or between different cultures, in time and space”. The new stands toward cultural realities determine the extraction of new significance from old cultural symbols as a result of modified references.

On the contrary, the concepts of multiculturalism and pluriculturalism suggest a state (multi – many, plural – more), the two concepts suggesting different size). In fact, Dasen, Perregaux and Rey (1999) consider that in a multicultural society interactions are not excluded, but they are not implicit to this concept. On the other

hand, the intercultural society promotes interdependencies, and because of this some authors consider that interculturalism focuses on the individual and not on its cultural features (Peter, 2006).

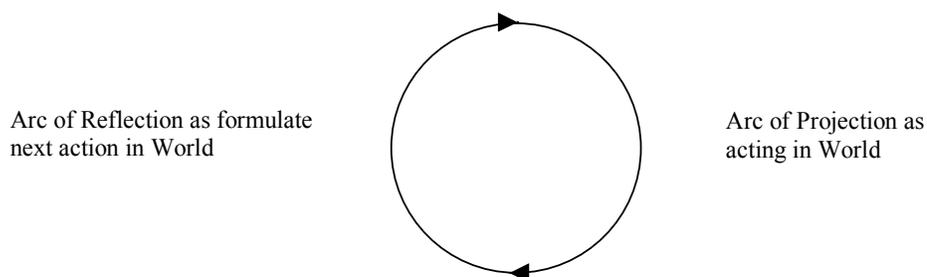
**Intercultural education** targets over the peaceful coexistence of cultures, to the building of a sustainable way of living together with the other in a multicultural society, in order to create understanding, respect, and dialogue among different cultural groups, in order to structure one's personality under pluralist terms. Intercultural education does not consider:

- that heterogeneity is a handicap, but a normal state;
- that cultural diversity is an obstacle for development, but wealth;
- that one should have a means for making up for inequalities, but „one should learn about equality” under reciprocity circumstances;
- that it addresses only minorities or a major/minor group, but that it addresses everybody; that it is a window open to other cultures, but that it is a door open to one's own culture;
- that one should support discrimination, but differentiation;
- that one should recognize ethnocentrism, but that one should recognize cultural diversity, etc.

Support to cover all dimensions of intercultural education comes from the European educational policies, which suggest a set of interventions for:

- integrating intercultural education in the process of learning;
- using a large variety of methods of learning/training;
- supporting the students for self-knowledge and for finding personal stereotypes and learning to overcome their
- combining individual and group's work activities;
- promoting students' partnerships;
- using ICT and media on intercultural education;
- preferring teacher training and not courses for students.

Nagata (2006) suggests a model of the activity of intercultural education, adapted after Gadamer's hermeneutical circle applied to human relations.



**Figure 1.** *Gadamer's hermeneutical circle applied to human relations.*  
*Adapted from Nakkula and Ravitch (Nagata, 2004)*

According to this model “in the arc of Projection – one acts in the world without realizing the assumptions, biases, and prejudices one is projecting into the situation that is the context for one's action. In the arc of Reflection - there is the opportunity to consider the results, to analyse one's own biases and prejudices, and to prepare for ongoing work in the world. This is certainly a recognizable cycle for interculturality” considers Nagata (2006, p. 33).

The model proposed by the cited researcher represents an efficient framework for practice for intercultural activities, framework in which the critical reflection has the most important role.

## 2.2. Media education and Media literacy

Media Education is “an ongoing process, which can develop and evolve” (Andersen), which leads to the understanding of media communication used in our modern society.

The purpose of media literacy education is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today’s world (Bergsma, 2007).

"Media literacy" is the expected outcome from work in either media education or media study. The more you learn about or through the media, the more media literacy you have. Media literacy is the skill of experiencing, interpreting/analyzing and making media products. Media literacy is the ability to interpret and create personal meaning from the verbal and visual symbols we take in everyday through television, radio, computers, newspapers and magazines, and advertising; the ability to choose and select; the ability to challenge and question (Thomas).

For the teaching-learning process is very important the fact that media education is *a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary process. It operates with knowledge from different domains and gives the opportunity for interdisciplinary studies.*

Integrating media education in the teaching-learning process, it contributes to the development of transversal skills: how to acquire skills using these media to communicate with others; how to analyze, critically reflect upon and create media texts; identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts; interpret the messages and values offered by the media; select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience; gain or demand access to media for both reception and production (Fedorov, 2003). Media education is not education with media. It can't be reduced only to developing media literacy.

There are many forms of media, which we meet every day, as text (newspaper, Internet), photos (in magazines, on the Internet, posters, TV, etc.), films (mostly on the TV), news, audio, etc. Another very popular media for teenagers is music. But music also could have very different messages, could promote different lifestyles. It is very important that students get used to listen to these music critically, as well as regarding the message (the text of the song), but also the melody, the style of the music.

Duncan has presented two approaches to Media Education in 1989. The first model of Media Education is an inquiry model. This model is “a structured framework” that will help students to stimulate open questioning and encourages students to be intellectually curious about the media:

- Who made this message?
- Why was this made?
- Who is the target audience (and how do you know)?
- What is this about (and what makes you think that)?
- What techniques are used? etc.

This model is especially suited to the introduction of media-literacy activities in the classroom.

The second model is based on critical teaching strategies. This model requires that students make important critical choices:

- What information is most important to this argument?
- What might be left out?
- What is it that I think about this subject?
- How did I arrive at what I think? Etc.

Referring to media education these questions could be put:

- How might different people understand this message differently?
- What is my interpretation of this and what do I learn about myself from my reaction or interpretation?

The junction of these two approaches given by Duncan (1989) can be a starting point for both intercultural and media education.

### 2.3. What aren't Intercultural education and Media education

As it is important to know what is intercultural and media education, also it is essential to know what they are not.

For example, the team of INTER Project (2002), prefers to describe what Intercultural Education is not:

- isolated celebrations: the often named "Intercultural week", "Gastronomic Day", "Peace Day", and so on;
- just learning about the characteristics of certain groups as "others", so as to "get to know them better";
- having recipes to solve conflicts, or to address so called differently labelled groups;
- educational programs aimed at specific groups, such as compensatory classes and the like;
- mixing students from different backgrounds without promoting positive relationships or other wider aims;
- avoiding conflicts! Conflicts are part of our everyday life; the key is to manage them properly, and to be aware of our biases, positively and actively learning to fight discrimination and prejudices.

In the case of Media education, it doesn't promote one of the next situation:

- replacing students' perspectives with someone else's (your own, a teacher's, a media critic's, etc.)
- sharing a critique of media without also sharing skills so students can critically analyze media for themselves.
- teaching students to think critically without also teaching skills of expression.
- teaching the technical skills needed to make media without also teaching critical thinking.
- using media literacy videos, films, books or other curriculum materials as a substitute for teaching critical inquiry skills.
- simply using media in the classroom.
- asking IF there is a bias in a particular message (since all media messages are biased), but rather, what the substance, source, and significance of a bias might be.
- about accepting oversimplifications or overgeneralizations about media or any other topic.
- about restricting or reducing complex debates to two sides.

Thus both media and intercultural education require complex approaches, centred on the formation of specific and transversal competencies.

## 2. Media and Intercultural Education in teaching practice – the ICTime Project

The ICTime project is a three year Comenius 2.1 project, started in 2006. The coordinator institution is *Rui Grácio Teachers Training Center*, in Seixal, Portugal; the partners of the project are: *Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai*, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania; *Osrodek Edukacji I. Zastosowan Komputerow*, in Warsaw, Poland; *Daugavpils Universitate*, in Daugavpils, Latvia). The main aim of the project is to support pre-service and in-service teachers and other school educational staff, primary and secondary school pupils, teacher trainers and university teachers, education authorities and policy makers, by providing the methodology that enriches intercultural education by using digital media at schools. Incorporation of the use of digital media in intercultural education provides the possibility to re-evaluate not only the aims and essence of intercultural education and its resources, methods, and outcomes, but also teachers' voice, responsibility, and contribution to the educational decision-making process at the local and national level. Methodology of intercultural education that highlights the use of digital media also could be a contribution to the improvement of educational policy. This process creates a learning experience that not only improves intercultural educational practice but supports and empowers both national and European community.

Many intercultural activities with different media were developed during the project, activities, which contribute in the same time to the development of intercultural competencies and media literacy. These

activities use different media, as films, photos, text, animation, etc. Also in these activities the Internet has an important role, as there are many different kind of resources on the net.

In the followings an activity with films is presented.

**Topic:** Creation of a film with intercultural message from a set of photos

**Competencies**

- creation of a film with intercultural message.

**Time:** 120 minutes

**Resources:**

- A set of 20-30 digital photos;
- Computer network with Internet access;
- Laptop and video projector.

**Steps:**

- Ask students to make groups of two, to watch the photos and to chose an intercultural topic for the scenario of a film, which uses the given photos;
- Ask students to make a scenario and than a film based on the scenario;
- Ask students to post the films to Youtube;
- Ask students to make group of six (from three small groups), watch the films made by other two small groups and formulate of the intercultural message of the film.

**Reflection and evaluation**

- Ask each big group to compare the formulated messages;
- Discuss in the class the intercultural message of the films.

**Anticipated difficulties**

- If the pupils can't use the MovieMaker program, the teacher should show them the basic operations before the activity. During the activity pupils could get help from the teacher, if they need. The use of the Movie Maker program is not difficult, so pupils can learn it during making the film.
- There are pupils, who will not have ideas, what kind of story to write. The teacher could help them by discussing with them, and giving some suggestions.

This activity required a high level media literacy, as not only interpretation of a media product is asked to students, but also production of it. From the intercultural point of view, students have to have intercultural knowledge to present a film with a meaningful message.

The presented activity also develops students' creativity and communication skills. Teachers, who frequently use creative activities in the classroom, observed, that such kind of activities becomes easier to fulfil by students after a time. They are happy to participate in these kinds of activities. But students, who are not used with creative tasks, find it difficult to do them and prefer activities, where they don't have to be creative.

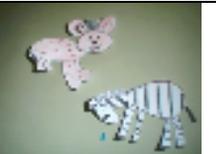
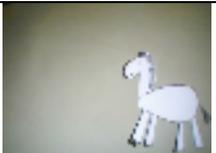
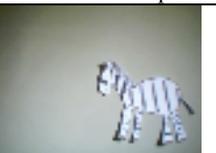
## Conclusion

To educate students interculturally supposes making them interact with other cultures and to experience insecurity, fear, rejection as well as security, trust, sympathy and empathy. It is not sufficient to read books and to listen to courses about cultures. It is also necessary to learn from and with people from other cultures. In the same time, Media education could intermediate successfully up to a level this intercultural contact and could contribute to the development of intercultural competencies through critical thinking.

In conclusion, we sustain the integrated study of these two disciplines, and also the inclusion of them in the school curricula in whatever discipline, and not as a separate school discipline.

## Appendix

The scenario of a film with intercultural message made from a set of photos. The drawings used in the photos are made by Aleksandra Janczak from Warsaw, Poland. The film made using this scenario can be watched on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SpKhmXx-oM>

			
In the forest a zebra was living ...	... and also two hyenas.	One day the zebra met one of the hyenas and they started to chat.	The hyena told to the zebra: you are a strange animal, because you have strips. The zebra started to cry...
			
... and he left crying.	He wished not to have any strip	One day he met the good fairy ...	... who explained him, that not all the animals are the same , some of them has strips, others spots, ... but this is not important.!
			
The zebra realized that he is not ugly or strange.	When he met the hyena, he told him, what the fairy had told him. The hyena listened to him and started to think ...	Then he find his friend and told him, what he heard from the zebra.	From then they became good friend and the zebra is always happy.

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