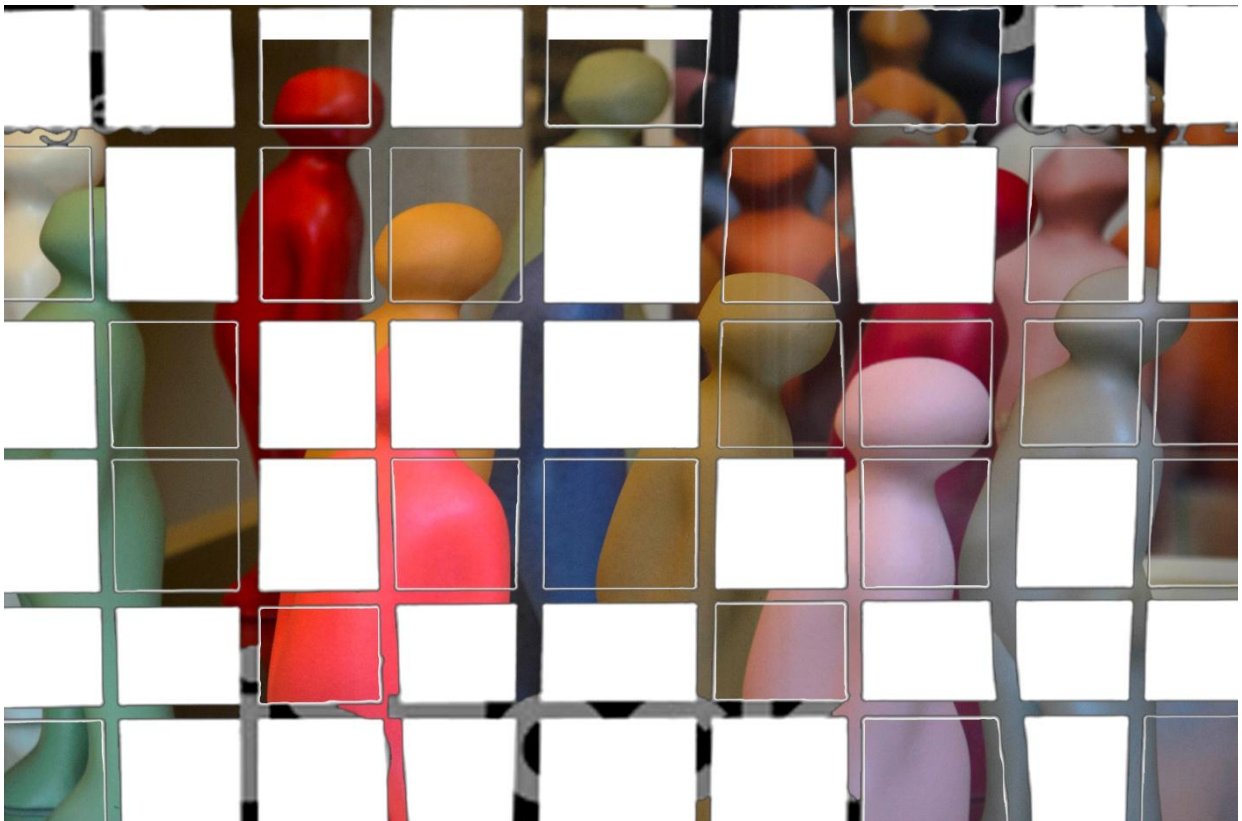


**GUIDELINES FOR
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
IN SCHOOL
INTERCULTURAL
DIALOGUE**



Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe

CiCe Jean Monnet Network, 2017

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Introduction

Within our globalised, multicultural world, education implies classes of diverse students of different origins, languages, cultures, identities, genders, religions, social classes. Therefore, concepts such as multicultural, intercultural, cross-cultural and even trans-cultural tend to become the norm and are more and more important not only in theory, but also in practice.

Social issues are the first challenge to education in general, and intercultural education as a special case, social exclusion and inequality being the most ardent issues and maybe the most difficult to overcome. Furthermore, we can identify general educational challenges of the educational systems, which refer to pragmatic issues, such as the introduction of topics related to cultural dialogue in the curriculum, the training of teachers, opportunities for students to develop intercultural competences in practical situations, as well, identifying and working for eliminating prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination. Therefore, in the specialized literature the concept of *intercultural pedagogy* appears, being defined as a pedagogy of relationship, a pedagogy of difference (that is to know, understand and respect differences) which prepares the individual to cope with a new social setup, by transmitting and transferring knowledge and developing specific (in terms of communicational skills, interpersonal relations and inter-communitarian ones, critical sense towards special identities, relativising models/role models (Rus, Bota, 2002, p. 22)).

The challenges to intercultural dialogue are also of linguistic nature. Kramersch (1993) discusses the connections language – culture and how we are formed and shaped by the language and by the culture of a specific language. This is closely linked to Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence which shows the same link between the two fundamental domains of our lives. This approach can lead to the development of intercultural awareness, intercultural communication, acceptance of cultural differences and openness, what we call 21st century skills.

The term intercultural dialogue was officially used in 2008, due to the Council of Europe's White Paper, the concept which "suggests a social and political response to the need for intercultural communication and understanding in what was then a rapidly expanding European Union" (Holmes, 2014, p.1). Intercultural refers to the space between cultures, to attitudes, skills and values such as: attention to diversity, communication, connection, acceptance, openness, positive attitude, a dynamic process.

Specific challenges: the case of Romania

Romania has always had a diversity of minorities, as a consequence of historical conditions, which would be, according to Neumann (2000): Hungarians, Romas, Germans, Serbs, Ukrainians, Czechs, Croatians, Turks, Jews Russians, Bulgarians, Poles, Armenians, Greeks and Italians. Clearly a multicultural population: especially in the areas of Transylvania and Banat, which became a space of multicultural tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and, linguistic exchange in the 19th and 20th century.

However, the consequences of the communist totalitarian regime have left serious marks on the relationships with minorities and in intercultural dialogue. As Neumann (2000) observes, some of the main obstacles in intercultural education would be “the attempt to preserve 19th century political ideology that assumed that nation and ethnicity are overlapping”; “the ignorance of minorities and their cultures”; and “the persistence of a centralised system and the predominance of stereotypes” (p. 108), to which Ivasiuc, Koreck, Kóvári (2000), in a relevant study of intercultural education in Romania, add the lack of openness towards the values of the other, the lack of authentic dialogue, the persistence of negative stereotypes of minorities. The politics of the communist period in terms of intercultural education were of social, cultural and ethnic levelling, therefore there is a void period in the history of intercultural education in Romania (Ivasiuc, Koreck, Kóvári, 2000).

In the '90s, after the communist regime was abolished, a lot of intercultural projects and educational policies in the area of intercultural education were proposed. There was a period of re-growth and concentration on the rights of minorities, which brought about many improvements in the domain. Intercultural education topics were introduced, the focus on intercultural skills was raised, and the awareness of intercultural differences and similarities was stirred. However, the beginning was slow and the problems to be solved quite difficult. We could enumerate the lack of training and experience of teachers, the lack of materials and the persistence of mentality problems mentioned earlier.

Though, in spite of the fact that nowadays minorities have access to education in their mother tongue (Hungarians, Germans, Serbian, Slovak) and most Romanian spaces are focused on dialogue, there is still a minority group, the Roma “most exposed to the risk of discrimination”(Rus,2012,

p.232). This disadvantaged community lives in poor economic circumstances, a condition that does not allow the minority to integrate. It is a common issue of Central and Eastern Europe, as researchers observe, with deep cultural roots. The social and economic factors (poverty), the cultural ones (a culture different from the one of the majority), and the lack of support within the educational system and of the society have all contributed to the actual situation, characterised by segregation, discrimination, high dropout rates.

One major step ahead is the National Strategy for Roma Integration which was adopted in 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/romania/national-strategy/national_en.htm) and which is the first public policy regarding this minority, which attempts to improve conditions for education, health, workforce, housing, and aims at ending segregation, discrimination and lack of opportunities.

Opportunities: the case of Romania

There are many opportunities in Romania related to the development of intercultural dialogue in different forms in education. The co-existence of different cultures has proved beneficial for many regions, which are a multicultural space and have developed intercultural dialogue over the centuries. The model of Banat region has been described by many researchers, Neumann mentioning the fact that “Ideas did not remain at an abstract level; they were developed in the course of an education in which multilingualism, the assimilation of traditions and customs, the interaction of religions, and the alliances of cultural aspirations with religion were fundamental. (Neumann 2000:119). The fact that there are schools in the minority languages (Hungarian, German, Serbian, Slovak) in the region is a

proof that Romania focuses on minorities' education and the preservation of different cultures.

The most disadvantaged community, as mentioned earlier, is the Roma minority, still with high percentage of early school leaving and discriminated against. Since 1990 positive action has been taken, positive discrimination measures were initiated in favour of the Roma community. Some of the policies introduced by the Ministry are general ones, but include this minority through the type of problems it has: policies and programmes regarding social inclusion, early school leaving (e.g. the programme *A Second Chance through Education*), special places in universities for Roma minority, teacher training for teachers of Romani language, developing resources for these subject, as well.

The National strategy for Roma integration that was put forward in 2012 and 2015 creates the conditions for changes within the educational system in order to integrate this minority. The focus is on integration, ending segregation, training of Romani teachers and improving early rate drop-outs rates. One of the promising practices relates to the dedicated places for Roma in public universities, which is a measure of positive discrimination.

In the last years many NGOs and associations have started projects on the integration of the Roma community, focusing on education. One of the most active and involved is the Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities, an NGO which has been active since 2008 and which has focused on campaigns and projects related to Roma integration and education(<http://policycenter.eu/en/>). The specific element of this organisation is the emphasis on alternative education and the fact that it focuses on the education of the mothers, as well, not only on children.

Among the institutions that are very active in developing projects and promoting intercultural dialogue, with a focus on disadvantaged minorities, we mention the Intercultural institute in Timișoara, which, since 1992, has been involved in over 50 projects, local, regional, national and international, being one of the pioneers in the field while promoting intercultural dialogue, democratic citizenship and the rights of the minorities(<http://www.intercultural.ro/index.php>).

Another promising aspect is the fact that within the new educational plan for lower secondary school there are optional subjects proposed, related to Intercultural education - starting with 5th grade Critical Thinking and Children's Rights, 6th grade - Tolerance and Intercultural education, 7th grade - Juridical Education and Democratic Citizenship (<http://www.edu.ro/index.php/pressrel/24187>), which aim at introducing subjects related to social sciences and focus on topics related to children's rights, democracy and improving intercultural competences and critical thinking skills. Higher attention has been given to the initial training as well as life-long/continuous training for the teaching personnel in view of developing specific competences to enable and implement education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and education for human rights, in the classroom, in school and in the community. Such a programme is the pilot project *Travel Pass to Democracy: Supporting Teachers in Preparing Students for Active Citizenship*, financed by both the European Council and the European Union, on-going in our country as well. As part of this project a version of the textbook has been translated to Romanian- *How all teachers can support citizenship and human rights education: a framework for the development of competences*. Other similar projects in progress in Romania: *Experiential learning in virtual media - critical resource in the initial teacher training for intercultural education* (2007- 2009), a CNCSIS

project, type A 1196, *Elaborating, experimenting and implementing curricular projects and strategies for both initial and life-long learning training for teachers from the perspective of intercultural education*, World Bank, (1998-2001).

Intercultural dialogue in schools

As can be seen from the above, it is important to note the context for intercultural dialogue, as this will in part determine the nature of educational responses to the situation and the specific objectives of activity. Nevertheless, we can consider some common factors in intercultural dialogue, and identify pedagogical challenges and responses.

Intercultural dialogue as a policy objective has been identified in some EU member states, spurred-on or endorsed by European initiatives such the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008, and the Erasmus E-twinning programme. These have encouraged schools to develop intercultural projects aimed at promoting tolerance, developing curiosity for other cultures and learning about their traditions. The Council of Europe elaborates a definition to state that 'the objective of intercultural dialogue is to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging. Intercultural dialogue can also be a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts by enhancing the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law' (Council of Europe, 2017).

In relation to educational practice the Council stress that based on existing experience, six crucial conditions must be fulfilled at the outset or achieved during the process:

- Equal dignity of all participants;
- Voluntary engagement in dialogue;
- A mindset (on both sides) characterised by openness, curiosity and commitment, and the absence of a desire to “win” the dialogue;
- A readiness to look at both cultural similarities and differences;
- A minimum degree of knowledge about the distinguishing features of one’s own and the “other” culture;
- The ability to find a common language for understanding and respecting cultural differences.

These imply an inter-cultural openness in policy and practice; as well as teacher skill and understanding in facilitating dialogue. In multi-cultural classrooms, and with some traditional pedagogies, or in situations where practitioners have little autonomy, some teachers may shy away from encouraging inter-cultural dialogue worried that it will bring about controversy. However, if citizenship education is to be more than learning facts about legal and political processes and seeks to achieve the objects above, then it must necessarily embrace issues that arise and teachers must have the skills to be able to constructively manage controversy.

The teaching of controversial issues requires the school to provide opportunities for truthful and honest discussions about points of conflict and agreement that are found in the real world (Berg et al, 2003). This implies more than providing a ‘safe space’ designed to protect sensitivities. Clearly there is need to establish an environment in which racism, sexism,

homophobia etc, is not tolerated, but this should not be at the expense of cutting out respectful exploration of similarity and difference. Moreover, a 'safe space' approach may deny children the opportunities to explore relevant topical and political issues. Issues which frequently arise with children relate to the use of drugs, racist incidents, bullying and acts of violence or vandalism in the community. Such issues are relevant because they affect the everyday experiences of children and it therefore follows that there is a role for the child to express opinion, discuss, debate and develop ideas during lessons. However this can bring its own problems.

Teachers are rightly concerned that their own contributions or those of pupils in their class may be biased and reflect strongly-held opinions which may be difficult to manage. As Berg et al (CiCe 2003) note there is need for '...balanced and careful measures of neutrality on the part of the teacher, whilst acknowledging that there may be some occasions when the teacher needs to assert a commitment to a value position. At other times the teacher may need to intervene if class discussion has not been sufficient to counter the expression of an anti-social viewpoint (for example a racist opinion) with the effect that individuals in the class are left exposed and vulnerable'.

In curriculum guidance for citizenship education in the UK, the need to address controversial issues was recognised and three approaches were recommended:

- The neutral chair approach: in which the teacher remains neutral, encouraging children to express their viewpoints whilst maintaining a respectful, tolerant environment that reflects 'ground rules' negotiated with the class beforehand.

- The balanced approach: as above, but the teacher may give a view (not necessarily their own) to ensure a balance of opinion is heard
- The stated commitment approach: in which a teacher may give their own view as a means of encouraging pupils to agree or disagree. Again their expressed viewpoint should be one that fits with values of respect and tolerance, and the teacher must be cognisant of the power that their positions afford.

Teachers will often use a combination of these approaches as the need arises. Also, as noted above, it is imperative that they establish with their class guidelines for working on controversial issues. Such 'ground rules' might include, for example, that no-one will have to answer a personal question and that no-one will be forced to take part in a discussion. The aim is to enable a free flow of ideas in a safe, non-threatening environment where students can think about and question their assumptions and listen to others. Thus we need approaches which enable children to develop:

- Confidence to voice their own opinions;
- Skills in recognising the views and experience of others;
- Critical thinking and in forming arguments;
- Co-operation and conflict resolution;
- Skills of democratic participation;
- Experience of taking action for change.

These deliberations may arise in general classroom activity, but in order to help ensure the development of intercultural dialogue, they also must be planned for with learning outcomes related developing inter-cultural competence. Some approaches might include:

- Small group discussions followed by plenary sessions to develop and synthesise arguments;
- Open-ended collaborative enquiries on topical and controversial issues in order to help develop skills in respectful dialogue, that seeks understanding and not ability to win an argument;
- Role play, simulations and debates that reflect events in society. This can help to move discussion from the personal, to focus on the argument, and gives opportunity to explore the viewpoint of others without commitment to those views;
- Participation in democratic processes of change: Intercultural dialogue can be an important process in identifying the needs and concerns of all students and these can be fed into the decision-making process. As such intercultural dialogue is also important in the development of competencies associated with active democratic citizenship.

Conclusions

Within our globalised, multicultural world, it is important that education develops intercultural competence, which is best achieved through dialogue. This can be supported by exchange schemes but also needs to be developed within schools, where increasingly classes have a multicultural make-up. Intercultural dialogue requires teachers to have the skills and confidence to manage the learning process. Inter-cultural dialogue necessitates 'respect, tolerance, openness, curiosity and commitment' that can only be fostered in an environment in which students can talk openly about their identities and experiences. This is not easily achieved and teachers need training and support in managing potential controversy.

However, despite potential difficulties it is imperative that teachers gain the necessary skills and confidence to meet the objectives of inter-cultural dialogue, which The Council of Europe argues includes ‘to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging’.

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A Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for 2015-2020

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The CiCe Jean Monnet Network is a consortium of universities with interest in how and what people learn about their society, a partnership that grew out of the CiCe Erasmus Academic Network, which had been in existence in various forms since 1998 with the support of the European Commission. Closely related to the Network is the CiCe Association, an independent body of individuals and institutions with academic and practical focus on citizenship education and identity formation in young people in Europe and the world.

The CiCe Jean Monnet network links 25 institutions in network from 17 states that are involved in training education professionals (teachers, social pedagogues, early childhood workers, youth workers etc) and concerned with citizenship education and the development of identities in young people.

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