Intellectual Output 1

"Library of best practices on intercultural communications"

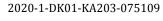## Activity1

"Literature review on academic best practices on intercultural communication"

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Contents

1. Introduction

The "PISH" or "Problem-Based Learning, Intercultural Communications and STEM in Higher Education" project aims to address the intercultural communication needs in the peer-to-peer learning environment of STEM students in HEIs. In parallel, through the project's objectives, educators will come across knowledge and best practices in the form of methodologies, exercises, games, activities and other tools to better facilitate intercultural communication within the target student groups (mix of foreign and local students or diverse groups of students).

The project will leverage the competences of the partners to equip the teachers with tools on how to guide students to become open-minded, culturally aware, culturally sensitive, culturally intelligent and on how students can successfully study together despite friction generating from diversity elements. Finally, the project aims at engaging with NGOs, policy makers and relevant associations that can assist in institutionalizing the project outcomes in HEIs.

2. Overview of Intellectual Output 1 '' Library of best practices on intercultural communications"

Intellectual Output 1 will be a Learning / teaching / training material based on the available and reliable literature and experience on best practices of intercultural communication. The material will be used by educators and trainers who aim to facilitate intercultural communications in a PBL environment with groups of international students.

The aim of the IO is to synthesize knowledge on various approaches to facilitating intercultural communications, creating a compendium of tested approaches from literature and practice in HEI, workplace and social encounters. The IO1 will function as an input that can be tested and adopted for the development of the toolkit and online platform.

The deliverable of IO1 will fulfill PISH objective 1 ''enhancing the intercultural communication coaching skills and competences of HEI teachers in a PBL learning environment'', as it will provide the teachers with a one stop shop in identifying different ways of facilitating intercultural communications with their students.

2.1. Structure of Intellectual Output 1

O1-A1 - Literature review on academic best practices on intercultural communication

O1-A2 – Literature review on non-academic best practices on intercultural communication

O1-A3 – Frameworks for intercultural communications between foreign students in HEIs

2.2. Description of the Activity 1 '' Literature review on academic best practices on intercultural communication''

Activity 1 refers to the scientific literature review related to intercultural communications in HEIs, work environment and social interactions. The literature review is on theories and practices on intercultural communication and intercultural dialogue.

The aim of this activity is to identify and categorize successful frameworks, methodologies, tools, and activities that facilitate intercultural communications. The deliverable will be a written literature review and a searchable PDF version (in all partners' languages) delivered by UTH.

The insights derived from this output will provide additional inputs to activities in IO2 and IO3. The PDF version is uploaded to the PBL based Intercultural communications online platform, developed in IO3.

3. Cultural contacts and intercultural communication -Presentation of the theoretical discussion

Introduction

In recent decades, international relations, and exchanges in fields such as economics, politics, and education have expanded and intensified to a great extent, bringing about changes both within societies and in relations between them. Thus, international economic cooperation, educational and cultural cooperation, and exchange, international migration, and tourism have created environments for frequent and daily contact between people of different cultural backgrounds. What conditions must be met for these intercultural encounters to have a positive outcome? Likely, some differences in the cultural patterns of the people they meet will lead to misunderstandings and communication difficulties. From a theoretical point of view, the investigation of the factors that can hinder or support communication in an intercultural contact condition is of particular importance, as well as the elaboration of methods that will contribute to the building of intercultural communication capacity, a capacity considered essential for active participation in modern multiculturalism. social reality. In this theoretical discussion, in the controversies that have shaped it to date, we will refer later.

Nowadays, the processes of intercultural communication in the main fields of realization mentioned above are the subject of a special scientific field, Intercultural Communication Studies. This field of science is interested both in the analysis of a series of communication barriers produced and reproduced in the modern multicultural and multilingual reality, such

as ethnic stereotypes and prejudices, ethnocentrism, and racism, as well as in the elaboration of theoretically substantiated educational evidence about intercultural communication capacity in all parts of communication. We must point out, however, that this branch is characterized by diversity, sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting, of key concepts, such as e.g., of culture, cultural differences, multiculturalism, superculturalism, intercultural learning. The result is a field with many theoretical approaches and models of education related to the building of intercultural competence. In addition to the above, the differences between theoretical and practical propositions are based on different choices of philosophical frameworks, e.g., cultural ecumenism vs cultural relativism, as well as in different choices of specialized theories concerning e.g., learning theories (behaviorism vs constructivism).

3.1. The concept of intercultural communication

Based on a more general definition of communication, intercultural communication can be defined as the exchange of messages between subjects with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, with the aim of mutual understanding and understanding, based on the course of negotiating the meanings that define and constitute the content of the communication.

In practice, intercultural communication takes place in two main areas, with the first being the transfer of printed, oral, and digital culture products from one socioeconomic system to another, through the medium of language, as each language incorporates and expresses a cultural code and reaches its recipient, thanks to a change of his cognitive system. The second area includes cases of intercultural encounters and exchanges arising from mobility at the international level (e.g., international organizations, international trade relations, international educational exchanges, international cultural relations, international research partnerships, internationalization of higher education programs), within the context of national societies, mainly due to migration flows, international tourism flows or the existence of historical minority groups (e.g., multiculturalism in the public sphere, in the workplace, in the tourism industry, in education, etc.).

Intercultural communication is a dynamic and complex process as it is influenced by several qualitative factors including: (a) The dynamics and characteristics of international political, economic, and cultural relations (e.g., international entrepreneurship and trade, educational exchanges, international governance, etc.).

(b) The applicable national policies for managing multiculturalism and the issues of social and educational integration of different minority and immigrant groups.

(c) The individual characteristics of those who communicate and interact (perceptions of the "other", experiences, political beliefs, etc.).

3.2. Obstacles in Intercultural Communication

We know from experience that obstacles and problems can arise in any communication. These are mainly related to differences between the communicators in terms of how they understand the roles or in terms of how they understand the values and rules according to which they act. According to Auerneheimer (2010), these barriers should not be interpreted only about individual characteristics of the communicators but also about the characteristics of the context in which communication takes place. In the case of intercultural communication, it is common to cite as the main source of obstacles and problems the different cultural backgrounds of the communicators, which expressed during the communication in the form of different expectations. Another source of the problem in the communication process is the degree of knowledge of the language of communication which is equivalent to the knowledge not only of the language system but also of its extralinguistic dimension, i.e., the appropriate language type for the given communication occasion. That is, a knowledge that starts from the language itself, however, leads to the culture in which it developed, emphasizing the deep connection of language with culture. In the same direction and non-verbal communication presupposes the knowledge of the cultural context of the other. The importance and value of specific daily practices, movements, gestures vary depending on the cultural context in which they take place.

3.3. Differences between national cultures as potential barriers to intercultural communication - E.T. Hall and G. Hofstede

Hall is referred to as the "father" of intercultural communication. Its positions are based on a concept of culture that operates, in the form of a tacit language and a hidden dimension, at the basis of all human behavior. Based on a series of ethnographic research, he expressed the position that human cultures are characterized by common, universal dimensions, which, however, are expressed differently in each culture, influencing accordingly the behaviors of the members of each cultural group. These differences in the way cultural commonalities are expressed can create barriers to intercultural communication (Hall, 1990 [1959], found in Hass 2020). These are the following three dimensions:

1. **Monochromatic vs polychronic perception of time:** individuals of monochromatic perception of time perceive time linearly and attach special importance to the observance of schedules. In contrast, in cultures with a long-term perception of time, individuals perform many actions at the same time and attach greater value to human relationships than to keeping to schedules.
2. **Spatial behavior:** In different cultures, we encounter different perceptions regarding the appropriate interpersonal distance in communication. Apart from the perception

of the extent of the physical distance between the communicators, the frequency of physical touch or eye contact plays an important role.

3. **Communicative style:** strong vs. weak connection to the context. In some cultures what style of communication is direct, the information is presented in as much detail as possible which weakens the importance of the context of meeting and communication. However, there are cultures in which communicators do not present their information in detail, thus making it important to include the communication framework.

From the perspective of E.T. Hall, a key obstacle to intercultural communication can be defined as that of the reduced consciousness of the individual in relation to the significant influence that the culture of his team has on his way of thinking. For this reason, this approach, as we will see below, emphasizes the development of awareness of the power of cultural background as a central goal of intercultural training (see Hass 2020).

An ecumenical view of culture is also supported by G. Hofstede (Hofstede et al. 2010), who describes the following as common dimensions of human cultures:

- **Power Distance Index - PDI:** refers to the degree of acceptance of differences in terms of the power that characterizes social positions and the hierarchical structure of social relations.
- **Individualism vs Collectivism - IDV:** refers to whether individual self-determination and individual autonomy or group and inclusion in it have greater value within a culture. According to this categorization of cultures, the cultures of the western countries belong to the category of individualism, while the cultures of the eastern countries belong to that of collectivism.
- **Uncertainty Avoidance Index - UAI:** refers to whether an uncertain future is assessed as a risk and should be addressed by rules or accepted and treated without fear, which increases the willingness of individuals to take risks.
- **Masculinity versus Femininity:** refers to the dominant gender values within a culture. In cultures in which the male role orientation prevails, the roles of the two sexes are distinct and the values of the male role prevail. In cultures oriented towards the role model, female values such as cooperation, care and equality prevail.
- **Orientation in time:** past and present vs future. Cultures differ in their orientation to the present (emphasis on flexibility, selfish tendencies), on the one hand, and the future (emphasis on traditions, savings, long-term planning).

The categorization of national cultures proposed by Hofstede has received strong criticism as it supports the notion that national cultures are internally homogeneous and perfectly

compact, an approach that overlooks several differences within each national culture (WeLearn, 2020). As Roth (2004: 117) explains, cultures are characterized by a degree of homogeneity, but at the same time, they are characterized by a significant degree of heterogeneity, i.e., by multiple internal differences, tensions, discontinuities, and contradictions. Cultures are therefore multi-layered systems with a relatively large internal diversity which is expressed, partly in a conflicting way, in individual local, social, or religious cultures. Another critique of Hofstede's model has to do with his essentialist approach to culture. In particular, the presentation of Western people as "developed and modern" and non-Western people as traditionalists who are prone to mysticism is a construction based on colonial thought, depicting nations "as historically defined, homogeneous and static entities" (Bock, 1999· Cray and Mallory, 1998· Tayeb, 2001· Holden, 2002· Kwek, 2003, op.Cit. Moulettes, 2007: 445). Thus, what seems to characterize the critique of Hofstede's study is that much of it deals with the validity of his model from a Western "scientific" point of view (Fougere and Moulettes, 2005, op. Cit. Moulettes, 2007: 445). Finally, the essentialist conception of gender differences in the construction of masculine and feminine values, arguing that men are "usually" more masculine and women more feminine, but also the fact that women's voices were silent in his research was another point of criticism.

In conclusion, by ignoring this reality we consider neither the dynamic relationship between individual and culture nor the dynamic character of culture itself. In other words, we ignore several other factors that play a significant role in the process of intercultural communication. These factors will be discussed below.

3.4. Another look at the barriers to intercultural communication - The importance of asymmetric social relations and power relations

But are the obstacles and problems in the case of intercultural communication solely due to the cultural differences and the different expectations of the participants? Participants in an intercultural dialogue always meet in a structured context of social conditions (e.g., dominant ideologies about migration and immigrants, about diversity and equality), articulate speech, and interpret events and situations through specific social positions (these are characterized by possibilities and restrictions) and corresponding identities (members of the majority or minority). Auernheimer (op. Cit.), describes several factors that may create problems in the case of intercultural communication, starting with Sociolinguistics 'position, that the communication framework influences participants' expectations, the way they interpret the contents of statements submitted in the dialogue as well as the means of communication they choose (e.g., language style, manner of addressing). Consequently, Auernheimer (op. Cit., pp. 45-56) suggests that the following be considered for the

interpretation of barriers and problems in intercultural communication, in addition to the biographical characteristics of the participants:

A) Asymmetries in social power and collective experiences: Intercultural relationships are usually characterized by asymmetry in social power which is related to the social positions in which they are located and from which participants in an intercultural encounter communicate (social status, economic inequalities, inequalities before the law). Asymmetries in terms of social power and social inequalities are closely linked to collective experiences of the past. As an example, we can mention the case of a meeting for collaboration of a citizen of a European country with a colonial past with a citizen of an African country, which has endured in the past for a long time the evils of colonialism (op. Cit., pp., 49). Such collective experiences and memories may also play an important role in an immigrant meeting and communicating with representatives of an institution/organization in the host country. The danger here is for participants to interpret any communication problems/barriers solely because of individual traits, thus ignoring the role played by both their social status and their collective experiences.

B) Pictures of the "foreigner": Our meeting with the "other" is preceded by the pre-existing social constructions for "him". These are value-charged images and perceptions, which affect, at least in the initial stage, the meeting between us. The collective construction of the "foreigner" is usually influenced by stereotypes and representations of "enemies", that is, the reproduction of the dividing line between "inside" and "outside", between "self" and "other" continues. Thus, in our encounters with people of different cultural backgrounds, our images of them play an important role, which is closely related to our collective experiences and memories but are also constructions of social discourse (op. Cit., pp. 52). The communication barrier in this case can manifest itself as a feeling of insecurity and/or distrust towards the "other".

C) Different cultural patterns: These are models that guide our social expectations and that cause significant barriers to intercultural communication. As a typical example we can mention the case of standards in terms of communication rules in a particular culture: how the communication is organized, etiquette followed, the way of alternating the speech between the participants. These are, as Auernheimer points out, culturally determined communication practices and etiquettes that refer to specific perceptions of social roles, that is, express specific norms and values. Such differences may cause problems in the level of relations between the participants, especially when there are differences between them in terms of their social strength.

Given the above, we can argue that the communicative state of an intercultural contact contains possibilities of intercultural exchange and learning to the extent that uncertainties and insecurities can be overcome that have their causes in both historically constructed and current reproduced images of the "other", foreign "but also in the very" nature "of communication, which, whether intercultural or monocultural, is for the participants, in any case, a demanding process of communication. Therefore, for an intercultural meeting to be characterized as successful, there must be respect among the participants of communication, a reflection on the influence of cultural background on personal interpretive patterns, sensitivity to differences in social power between groups, but and attitudes that demonstrate interest, motivation, and flexibility.

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4. Intercultural competence

A prerequisite for the success of intercultural communication is intercultural competence. Empirical data from the fields of tourism, international relations, international entrepreneurship, and higher education confirm the importance and role of intercultural competence in intercultural contacts, pointing out that knowledge of a foreign language, even if excellent, is not sufficient for a constructive and meaningful intercultural communication. There are many instances where the purpose of communication cannot be achieved if it is not accompanied by the ability to understand the influences of the context in the way we try to communicate with the culturally "different".

4.1. Concept definition issues

In the relevant literature, the concept of intercultural competence is not defined in a unified and commonly accepted way. Rathje (2006) categorizes these differences as differences related to the following issues:

1. How" defines the goals for which intercultural competence is built. Two main directions have emerged: the first direction supports the main goal of developing the intercultural capacity that of communication effectiveness, based on a tool reasoning that serves mainly economic type interests and interests. In this case, the main issues are those of avoiding misunderstandings and weakening the influence of cultural differences in the communication process, so that it leads quickly, unhindered, and, above all, without stress to conciliation (See Moosmueller 2020). The second direction defines the development of intercultural competence as a process of transforming the identity of the ego in the context of intercultural communication and meeting with people from a different culture. Intercultural communication plays an important educational role in this case as it is considered to contribute to the broadening of the individual perspective on issues of social relations in a multicultural society as well as to the globalized world and to the expansion of social possibilities in dealing with and managing series. challenges related to the multicultural treaty (ibid.).

2. Intercultural competence is a special or universal type of competence. Some researchers approach and define intercultural competence as a specially focused ability to understand one or more "other" cultures. Some other researchers define intercultural competence as a general competence that relates to the experience of the "foreigner". In this case, the intercultural capacity is constructed as a capacity for reflective understanding of the "foreigner", in the sense of understanding the processes of its social construction.

3. What communication situations can we define as intercultural. There are two main directions here: in the first case, the concept of interculturalism is used when people belonging to different national cultures are involved in communication. Cultural differences, in this case, are defined as differences between national cultures. In the second direction, the concept of interculturalism is linked to cultural pluralism within immigrant societies. In this case, the concept of intercultural communication is used for all cases of communication between members belonging to different social groups.

4. How can we define the concept of culture?

We will then mention some definitions of intercultural communication as indicative examples of the differences mentioned above.

According to Bolten (2001: 86-87), intercultural communication ability is a social ability with which the individual can learn about "other" cultures, to apply this knowledge and skills in unknown situations, to understand cultural differences, and finally, to respect and recognize all other cultures using any given language (Foncha & Sivasubramaniam, 2014: 376). In other words, it is the "means" of bridging the gap between the "himself" and the "foreigner" thus satisfying the need to understand "cultural differences" (Luchtenberg, 1999). Gudykunst (2003) argues in the same direction: intercultural competence is a capacity for conscious communication, which refers both to the need to acquire knowledge for others (e.g., knowledge of foreign languages) and to the need to build communication skills with more important ones of empathy (cognitive, emotional, and interactive), tolerance of ambiguity, communication adaptation and critical acceptance of different perceptions and behaviors. In other words, the full concept of intercultural competence refers both to the need to build skills related to the management of the cognitive content of the communication and skills related to the creative overcoming of problems in relationships with the "other". These definitions reflect an "instrumental" approach to intercultural competence and understand cultural differences almost exclusively as differences between national cultures.

Table 1: Dimensions of intercultural competence according to Gersten (1990) and Bolten (2000) (Krause & Pauls, 2003: 4).

COGNITIVE DIMENSION	EMOTIONAL DIMENSION	BEHAVIORAL DIMENSION
[Understanding the phenomenon of culture in relation to perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and mode of action] ♦♦♦ [Understanding different cultural contexts] ♦♦♦ [Understanding the cultural differences of interacting people] ♦♦♦	[Aambiguity-tolerance] ♦♦♦ [Frustration tolerance] ♦♦♦ [Ability to deal with stress and reduce complexity] ♦♦♦ [Self-confidence] ♦♦♦ [Flexibility]	[Willingness and willingness to communicate is the initiating practice of the partial characteristics of the affective dimension] ♦♦♦ [Communication skills] ♦♦♦ [Social competence (being able to build relationships and trust with foreign

[Understanding the peculiarities of an intercultural communication process] ♦♦♦ [Post-communicative competence]	♦♦♦ [Empathy] ♦♦♦ [Role distance] ♦♦♦ [Freedom from prejudice] ♦♦♦ [Openness, tolerance] ♦♦♦ [Low ethnocentrism] ♦♦♦ [Acceptance/respect for other cultures] ♦♦♦ [Intercultural willingness to learn]	cultural interaction partners)]

Straub et al. argues in the opposite direction (2010: 21-24), as they point out that the contents of intercultural competence are broader than the knowledge of "others", while elements of the individual's personality, such as fears, anxieties, desires influence the attitude of a subject towards the intercultural encounter, in other words, determine his readiness to turn an "accidental" intercultural contact into a process of intercultural learning. There is, therefore, a need for intercultural competence not to be limited to knowledge of "others", but also to include self-knowledge of our historically mediated relationships with "them".

Therefore, for the definition of intercultural competence as well as the determination of contents of its individual dimensions, we must consider the broader social conditions of intercultural encounters. It is pointed out that the "different" always meet within a formed
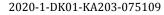
framework of social conditions (e.g., dominant ideologies about immigration and immigrants, about diversity and equality), articulate speech, and interpret facts and situations through specific social positions (these are characterized by possibilities and limitations) and corresponding identities (majority or minority members). According to this approach, "cultural differences" cannot express differences of cultures that (pre) exist outside the action of the subjects or outside institutional practices. If we understand culture as a social act, then we must accept that cultural differences also express differences in access to social goods and social positions. Only if we consider the real social conditions of "meeting" of the groups can we avoid the risk of strengthening existing dividing lines and discrimination (Auernheimer 2010, Govaris 2006, Leiprecht 2006).

Given the above, the contents of the dimensions of intercultural competence can be specified as follows (Leiprecht, 2006: 41).

Table2: Dimensions of intercultural competence (Leiprecht, 2006: 41)

COGNITIVE DIMENSION	EMOTIONAL DIMENSION	BEHAVIORAL DIMENSION
[Knowledge about the internal diversity of cultural groups] ♦♦♦ [Knowledge of "ethnicity" and "nation" construction processes] ♦♦♦ [Knowledge of the social significance and functions of stereotypes and prejudices] ♦♦♦ [Knowledge of the possible influences/ effects of language hierarchy]	[Empathy for the experiences of stigmatization and exclusion of members of different cultural groups] ♦♦♦ [Self-reflection about self-evident patterns of interpretation] ♦♦♦ [Self-reflection and critical attitude towards "self-evident" assumptions about our social position, our social and cultural identity]	[Ability to act in a context of asymmetric relations of social power and economic inequalities] ♦♦♦ [Ability to act in the context of an intercultural encounter from the perspective of a culture of equal coexistence] ♦♦♦ [Ability to act based on respect for human rights and social justice]

4.2 Intercultural training

The question of "how" to build intercultural competence is answered by intercultural training programs. The beginnings of intercultural training programs, mainly in the form of non-formal forms of education, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s in the USA. The first intercultural training programs, according to Mazziota et al. (2016), were designed and implemented by companies that operated internationally and aimed to prepare executives and partners for their effective involvement abroad. Subcultural training activities were then extended to other social sectors. The concept plays an important role in the fields of economics, and international business, international relations, international educational exchanges, as Mahadevan & Mayer (2012) typically point out: "intercultural training has become a standard tool of the corporate human resource development » (e.g., in education).

The concept of intercultural training (intercultural training/interkulturelles training) is defined in various ways. In a related paper, Rathje (2010:216-217) presents some broad definitions of the concept from the English and German-speaking space. She notes that in the English-speaking world the concept includes, according to Albert (1994) actions that aim "to facilitate effective interactions between culturally different persons". Intercultural practice is generally defined as a process of intercultural learning both at the level of staff development (e.g., of a business) as well as in the level of development of the personality of the individual. In the German-speaking world, as well, the relevant definitions are general and broad, as they define as the content of intercultural training programs "actions that aim to make a person capable to adapt constructively, and effectively to a cultural encounter condition". The concept of intercultural practice, according to the definition of IKUD, refers to actions of staff development (e.g., institutions, agencies, companies) and personality, which aim at building appropriate knowledge as well as the formation of appropriate perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors that play an important role in interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds (see IKUD-Seminare).

The main objectives of intercultural training seminars are as follows (see IKUD-Seminare): (a) the cognitive objectives: According to Herbrand (2002), in an intercultural seminar, participants need to understand how "their" culture influences the perception of an "other" culture; conflict management skills, and in the sense of knowledge and skills that prevent potential conflicts.

4.3. Intercultural training programs – Methods and context

Gudykunst & Hammer (1983, found in Mazziota et al, 2016: 13, see also Ang-Stein 2015), have categorized intercultural training programs, which are implemented through a series of

special methods, based on two criteria, the method (didactic or experiential) and the content (general or specific).

Table 3: Summary categorization of intercultural training by content and method (Bolten 2006, found in Mazziotta et al, 2016: 14).

	Didactic (passive) Approach	Experiential (interactive) approach
General Cultural content	[General cultural assimilators] ♦♦♦ [Presentations and discussions on intercultural communication and comparative intercultural psychology] ♦♦♦ [Educational Videos]	[Simulations and role plays for the development of intercultural awareness] ♦♦♦ [Contrast Culture Trainings] ♦♦♦ [Reflection techniques]
Special Cultural contents	[Culture specific Assimilators] ♦♦♦ [Teaching foreign languages] ♦♦♦ [Intercultural dialogues]	[Intercultural workshops for intercultural communication] ♦♦♦ [Culturally specific simulations and role plays] ♦♦♦ [Study visits and excursions in target countries with cultural interest]

4.4. Didactic approach of Intercultural Training

The programs with **didactic-cognitive orientation aim** almost exclusively at the dissemination of information about cultures and are differentiated into two sub-directions:

— Didactic culture general training: The main goal here is for the trainees to develop an awareness of the influence that culture has on the perceptions and actions of people (i.e., both on their own perceptions and actions and those of people from different cultures). Through this process, the development of general intercultural awareness is sought.

— Didactic culture-specific training: In this case, training is required to prepare for a specific culture. This can be done through the following methods.

The **main methods** used in the implementation of the above guidelines are the following (see Ang-Stein, 2016: 79):

— **Lectures/seminars** on cultural anthropology, intercultural psychology, the theory of intercultural communication.

— Presentations (University Model): oral presentations by expert scientists aimed at transmitting historical, geographical, and political information, information on cultural differences (e.g., norms, values, beliefs), and economic living conditions.

— **Case study:** The focus is on complex insights into living conditions, to identify a problem for which participants must find appropriate and detailed interpretations and finally propose possible solutions.

— **Culture assimilator:** This is a special book describing events that usually characterize the meetings of members of one cultural group with members of another cultural group. Concerning these events, the participants (Assimilators) are offered different and culturally defined possibilities of interpretation and behavior. The goal is for the Assimilator at the end of the process to be able to interpret these events in the same way that members of the other cultural group interpret them. This proves that the Assimilator can place himself in the position of a member of the other culture.

— **Study visits/Excursions:** For example, information and materials are given to participants, such as city maps or public transport timetables. They are tasked with gathering information on a topic and then discussing and evaluating the results.

— **Film screening:** Used to illuminate aspects of life in foreign cultures. Through this process there are opportunities to discuss a series of topics that the narrative of each film highlights.

4.5. Experiential approach or interaction within Intercultural Training

Programs that aim to gain experiences of interaction with different cultures. These programs are divided into two subgroups:

— General education with experiential culture: The goal of this group of programs is to raise awareness and prepare participants for intercultural communication, helping them to understand how their culture affects their perceptions, thinking, and values.

— Experiential-culture specific trainings: This group of programs aims to inform the participants about a specific culture (e.g., historical background, cultural differences) to get acquainted and to be able to make the best language choice in an intercultural communication context.

The **main methods** that are used in the context of these directions:

— **Role-playing games:** The most common form of role-playing in the field of intercultural competence development is the Cultural-Awareness-Training technique: This method aims to realize the influence of our culture on our perceptions, patterns of thinking, values , and the strengthening of our consciousness for their relative character. Simulative role play is another technique (Rathje, 2010), which focuses on the re-enactment of a real situation. This situation may involve professional communication with one or more international partners or a conflict in the communication context between partners from different cultural backgrounds. In both cases the goal is to broaden the intercultural competence of the participants (ibid., P. 220). This can be achieved through intermediate goals, such as "recognizing" and changing patterns of behavior, developing empathy through role sharing, and empathizing with the experiences of others.

— **Simulation (Rathje, 2010: 221):** In this method, participants play in typical groups of actors in alternating scenes and situations. A key feature of their interaction is the element of tension and stress. In this context, the members undertake the task to try in many rounds of the game various possible solutions.

— **Contrast Culture approach:** According to this approach, the conscious perception of patterns of a foreign culture presupposes a specific contrast culture. The aim of this method is for the participants to build a stable system of cultural orientation, which will allow them to cope properly and effectively with the challenges of a different environment.

— **Workshops:** Are cultural awareness workshops that have a didactic character and aim to improve the ability of participants to communicate effectively with different cultural groups through their involvement. Specifically, they include topics such as historical issues aimed at highlighting injustices and wrong immigration experiences (Shepherd, 2019: 2), belief systems (cultural differences), but also issues of interaction approach, practices, that is, to achieve functional communication.

4.6. Intercultural training: The problem of reproducing stereotypes and criticizing the use of a static conceptualization of culture.

According to Mazziotta et al (2016), the evaluation of intercultural training is necessary as some methods that are applied may lead to undesirable, i.e., contrary to the desired results. These results mainly include the strengthening of stereotypes, prejudices, and stigmatization behaviors, as well as the creation of feelings of insecurity in contact with members of different cultural groups. As an example, they cite, based on the research of Vorauer & Sasaki (2009), cases of intercultural training in which the method of practicing in the adoption of the other's perspective is often used. It has been observed that when in the framework of this method the trainees come in direct contact with members of another cultural group, whose point of view they are called to adopt, then the "meta-stereotypes" is activated. These are assumptions regarding the "how" the person of the other team perceives my team, i.e., what characteristics it attributes to it. If I assume that he attributes negative traits to my team, then there is a significant possibility that my assumptions will ultimately negatively affect and hinder my intention to adopt his perspective. It cannot, therefore, be taken for granted that such methods of building an intercultural capacity lead in any case to positive results.

Several researchers focus on the fact of unwanted reproduction of prejudices and stereotypes in the context of applying methods of practicing intercultural competence. They criticize the adoption of a static concept of culture: both the culture of the people taking part in the training and the cultures of the "others" for whom they wish to build knowledge are presented as solid and homogeneous, thus promoting the misconception that the actions and choices of members of different cultural groups are determined by common cultural values and principles. Based on this approach, what should be built as knowledge in intercultural training is the knowledge of "cultural differences" with one or another culture as well as the "how" these intercultural differences affect the perceptions and practices of their members. This standardization of cultures based on their cultural differences from "our" culture inevitably leads to the reproduction of stereotypes as it does not consider the broader social processes that influence the perceptions and actions of members of a group or the fact that cultures are characterized by internal differences and pluralism. Based on this

critical approach, Auerneheimer (2010) evaluates the method of practicing intercultural competence Cultural Assimilator as deficient. From the point of view of this method, any communication problems in the context of an intercultural encounter are interpreted exclusively as problems arising from statically understood cultural differences that characterize the reference cultures of the participants. In this way, however, the cultures are not presented essentially, but the fact that the social conditions in which individuals live have a significant influence on the perceptions and actions of individuals is also obscured. Consequently, the understanding of the "other" presupposes not only knowledge of its culture but also knowledge of the social conditions in which it thinks and acts.

Based on the above, the question arises regarding the concept of culture that should be considered in the context of intercultural communication training to reduce the risks of reproducing stereotypes and prejudices. This means that a concept and understanding must be sought that will not ignore its potential character, its relationship to social structures and relationships as well as the dynamic character between individual and culture. In fact, in today's debate on intercultural competence, the position is adopted that "national identity does not represent a culture, as culture, identity and national identity are complex constructions" (Di Mauro & Bolzani, 2020: 9, op.cit. in WeLearn). For example, the individual is part of different cultures, as he belongs to different groups and consequently creates multiple cultural relationships and identities. It must be borne in mind that individuals belong to more groups, which leads us to the conclusion that they belong to and interact with more than one cultural context. At this point, it is important to emphasize this dynamic relationship between the individual and the cultural context: individuals are influenced and influence culture at the same time. And this element urges us to deal critically and thoughtfully with any stereotypical expectations regarding the way of thinking and acting of people belonging to different cultures. Theories and proposals for intercultural communication based on the approach of cultural diversity move in this direction, an approach that defines cultural differences more broadly, leaving behind the dichotomous and essentialist perception of differences as differences between national cultures. From the perspective of the diversity approach (see Auernheimer 2010, 39) the focus is on differences that have to do with work style, learning style, role models, values as well as differences between gender, age, social class, etc. The critique goes so far as to reject the very notion of culture, favoring the approach of cultural identity. Therefore, according to the literature, it is possible to distinguish two main different perspectives of "culture": the one that approaches it as something static and the one that approaches it as a dynamic and complex process of logic (Dean, 2001, op.cit. Di Mauro & Bolzani in WeLearn, 2020).

Considering the criticism of intercultural training methods that instead of weakening reinforce ethnic stereotypes and prejudices and wanting to avoid the pitfalls of using a static

concept of culture, Oslands & Birds developed the "Cultural Sensemaking" method in response. According to her, during the implementation process of training, the trainer should:

- Help participants understand the complexity of their culture
- Give them cultural dimensions and values, as well as sophisticated stereotypes as key tools
- To develop the skills of participants in cultural observation and behavior
- Ask them to do an in-depth study of a culture
- Focus on learning appropriate behavior in other cultures and developing cultural hypotheses and explanations for paradoxical behavior (ibid.: 74)

In the same direction W.G. Stephan and C.W. Stephan (2013) argue that the effective design of intercultural programs should include the following. First, programmers need to be well acquainted with the cultures and groups involved, the elements of these cultures, their histories, and the history of the relationships between these cultures. Another key to ensuring success is setting specific program-related goals. For example, setting goals such as promoting immigrant-resident relationships, resolving conflicts, increasing empathy, reducing inter-group stress, reducing stereotypes and prejudices, and improving nonverbal communication skills contribute to the effectiveness of an intercultural program. On the contrary, research data show that the formulation of general goals of broader concepts, such as the improvement of intercultural relations or the development of skills, etc. do not have the expected results, due to the difficulty of their general formulation. In the same direction, theories of culture and cultural change can contribute to the successful design of a program, if related to its goals, while the focus on psychological and communication processes can lead to the results we want from intercultural education and training programs. In particular, the activation of cognitive processes such as analytical thinking, self-regulation, categorization of group boundaries or procedures to address prejudice, but also emotional processes such as empathy, positive intercultural emotions, and reduction of stress between groups, skills Listening, transparency in the views of others, displaying culturally appropriate non-verbal behaviors, are steps that help to achieve the individual goals. Therefore, another factor to consider is the appropriate techniques and exercises that will frame the goals and processes chosen by the designers. At this point, it should be emphasized that their selection should include factors such as the context, conditions, and characteristics of the participants for the technique to perform as well as possible. Finally, the evaluation of the program with a focus on its feedback function (evaluation of result and procedures) is one of the most important steps in designing a successful intercultural education and training program.

Table 4: Bolten (2016, pp. 81-82) proposes a specific orientation framework for setting intercultural trainings goals, to avoid the limitations, we have highlighted previously.

Key aspect	Possible objectives of intercultural training (orientation examples)
Polyvalence	Cultures or cultural fields of action as not sharply defined Understand definable (→ fuzzy) and potentially open networks. Keep an eye on multiple cultural affiliations. Diversity and heterogeneity of cultural actors / groups of actors identify. Differences not only in terms of their misunderstanding, but especially with regard to their potential opportunities. Structurally processual thinking in the sense of either-or as also both and. Binary mindsets and models of appropriateness be able to critically assess their use (→ appropriateness bipolar explanatory grid, dichotomous images such as foreign vs. Check culture A vs. culture B).
Relationality	Cultures are understood as products of the most diverse forms of Maintaining relationships (in the broad sense of the Latin colere, cultum) of their direct and indirect actors. Awareness of the multirelationality of the individual and the polyrelationality of collectives and fields of actors; recognize / avoid impermissible generalizations. Recognize that cultural fields of actors due to the complexity and the non-linear nature of their relationship networks cannot be grasped as homogeneous entities (→ inclusion of global historical perspectives). Actor field relationships as part of global relationship networks and - understand dynamics. Intercultural processes as potentially cohesive and synergetic Realize interactions (→ positive incidents).

	Reflect on intercultural action as a situationally bound form of predominantly insecure action (due to a lack of norm / rule identification, plausibility and / or relevance).
Perspective reflexivity	*Understand cultures as conventionalized, dynamic, and perspective-dependent constructs.* *Reflect on oneself in one's worldviews depending on the context and be able to position (→ say no and explain this plausibly can).* *Being able to take on reciprocal perspectives.* *Being able to communicate the respective positioning to others in a conclusive and appreciative manner.* *Value-neutral, but able to report / tell emotionally (→ storytelling).* *Practice and initiate knowledge / competence communication can (knowledge and competence potentials of actors of a make the intercultural field of action transparent; actors take them seriously in their socialization stories, in their expertise to be interested in).* *Develop awareness of power asymmetries that can arise from intercultural activity (e.g., language use).*
sustainability	*Understand the basics of sustainable relationship building (→ sustainable glocal relationships) be aware of (trust, communication / initiative skills, perspective reflexivity, patience, etc.).* *Initially failed or not realized intercultural relationships treat not as destroyed, but as disturbed (→ to a later again).* *To motivate beyond the training measure to collaboration / networking activities (with each other, with other actors).*

Finally, Hass (2020, pp. 280-285), synthesizes the proposals that have emerged from the critique of the methods of intercultural training, in the form of the following instructions for the design and implementation of an intercultural training:

— Adoption of an open and dynamic concept of culture

— Specialization of the frameworks of intercultural meeting and communication to which the training refers (the more specialized the meeting and communication frameworks are, the less there is a need to simplify the complexity of the meeting conditions)

— Reflection on how culture affects people's perceptions and actions

— Highlighting the diversity of the relationships between the individual and the culture of the affiliation group, i.e., the possible different ways of connecting the members of a group, at the level of their daily life, with the common culture

— Open confrontation with generalizations and evaluations (collective reflection in the group of trainees on patterns of perception of the "foreigner" and in the evaluations of the charges)

— Adoption of the constructivist concept of learning (the instructor does not teach "objective" knowledge to "strangers", which would certainly lead to the reproduction of stereotypes, but creates a learning environment in which learners process their cultural patterns of perception and interpretation of the world as social constructions)

— Priority over experience over theoretical knowledge of culture (personal narratives may be less charged with stereotypes provided narrators are aware of the subjectivity and particular perspective that characterize their personal experiences)

— From the dimension of culture to the dimension of perception (the focus is not on the "other" culture but on the way, we perceive the diversity of the "other" culture)

— Culture and cultural differences (topic of "how" learners understand the meaning of culture and cultural differences)

— Building intercultural capacity through the strengthening of reflection and negotiation skills

5. Fields of application of Intercultural communication

5.1. Intercultural communication in the multicultural classroom

The educational system is a basic socializing institution, and for this reason, it is called to play an important role in the democratic management of cultural pluralism. In particular, the school is one of the main recipients of the request to cultivate intercultural communication skills in all students. As intercultural communication ability is a pre-eminent ability to be critical of processes that hinder the demands of a constructive intercultural encounter, such as e.g., ethnic stereotypes and prejudices, the question arises of "how" to cultivate this ability in the context of school teaching and learning. As we have already mentioned, the most important obstacles to the successful outcome of an intercultural encounter are the existing asymmetries in terms of the social power of the groups (asymmetries in terms of the power associated with the positions from which the persons of an intercultural encounter interact, e.g., social status, economic inequalities, inequalities before the law) as well as the negatively charged images of the other (Auernheimer, 2010). A pedagogical and educational possibility to face and overcome these limitations in the direction of building intercultural competence is theoretically offered by Lipman's (2006) proposal for the transformation of the classroom into an exploratory community. We will refer to key points of this proposal to highlight its value and importance for intercultural learning and for building intercultural competence, as presented earlier from a critical point of view.

Lipman (op. Cit. pp: 123) suggests transforming the classroom into an exploratory community in which students through dialogue will have opportunities to "generate and exchange ideas, clarify concepts, develop hypotheses, assess potential consequences, and in general, to think logically together, while learning to enjoy their mental interdependence ". The possibilities of a subjectively framed reflection of individual positions and arguments are cited by Lipman as one of the most important advantages of operating a classroom in the form of an exploratory community: "Community members begin to seek and correct methods and procedures the others. Therefore, to the extent that each participant can internalize the methodology of the community, everyone can become self-correcting in their way" (ibid., 242). The classroom as a community of inquiry has the characteristics of a democratic dialogue community, in which everyone participates equally, developing dialogue-like solidarity with each other, as they jointly seek arguments to critically substantiate criteria, arguments, rules and to reach a temporary consensus around a specific issue (Weber, 2013).

It is of particular interest to us that in Lipman's proposal for the functioning of the classroom as a learning community, a central conception of the student plays a central role, according to which he functions not only as a recipient and carrier of cultural values but also as a

potential producer of culture (this is the dynamic relationship between an individual and a culture mentioned above). From this point of view, school learning is not a tool-like reproductive process of culture, a process that fixes the child in the role of the passive recipient of cultural rules. Learning is understood as a pedagogical concern for the empowerment of the child's cultural potential: Participating in a community of exploration means participating in culture by giving meaning to (common) cultural symbols so that they express both my "own" experiences and my "own" interests, mainly in the sense of enriching the communicative search for forms of social coexistence, which bind us around common issues, while ensuring, at the same time, to all, possibilities of a particular individual development (Govaris, 2013). It turns out that the operation of such a community is contrary to the practices of the dominant version of intercultural learning, which wants students to communicate almost exclusively as representatives of cultural groups, thus trapping them in restrictive ethnic identities.

The exploratory community creates conditions for the acquisition of experiences of collective reflection, mutual recognition, and solidarity, enhancing (a) criticism, (b) the creative, and (c) the loving dimension of thought. According to Lipman, critical thinking is the opposite of a thought, which generalizes, thus obeying the stereotypical and rather static conception of the relations that govern the world: in any kind of imposition of stereotypes (…), it is hostile to any dogmatism" (ibid., 243). Two other characteristics are valuable for our discussion: (a) because the investigative community relies heavily on self-organization, a sense of solidarity between the participants plays a central role (Weber, 2013) and (b) the investigative community is supported and dependent on the mutual understanding of the participants as equal, which it promotes. Consequently, any differences between them have the value of different knowledge resources, which can be used for the good of the community (Glaser, 2007).

From an intercultural point of view, the development of critical thinking, as defined by Lipman, is of particular importance as it can support the learning objective of reflecting the cultural and social conditions of "our perception" and "our action", i.e., the confrontation with all the self-evident representations of the world and the internalized values that underpin social identity. From this point of view, the ability to critically analyze reality creates conditions for the release of interacting subjects from the limitations of their culturally defined roles, as well as opportunities for their creative redefinition or the development of new ones. Furthermore, in the context of the exploratory community, it is possible to overcome a restrictive recognition of the "other" which focuses exclusively on the origin (past) and not on the biographical becoming of the difference (present and future) of the "other" (see Govaris & Kaldi 2017).

Thoughtful thinking is defined as thinking with a double meaning: "we think the object of our thought as if it concerns us personally and on the other hand we are concerned with our way of thinking" (Lipman, 2006:287). In the second case, the importance of the investigative community is emphasized, in terms of seeking to strengthen interpersonal relationships. The premise is that attitudes of acceptance of pluralism and empathy as well as equal participation are strengthened within the community. Experiences and attitudes are strengthened in each case, which can support coexistence in a democratic and pluralistic society.

The above has been confirmed in relevant research. It has been found that participation in a community of inquiry contributes to the transformation of the egocentric way of thinking towards the adoption of an intersubjective view of the evaluation of things (Weber, 2013: 124). It seems, then, that such a framework of interactive learning enhances awareness and sensitivity to different interpretations of the world and contributes to building an ethos of recognizing diversity (Nießeler, 2007). At this point, it is understood that the exploratory community is at the core of intercultural learning as it experiences experientially motivates participants in a process of critical distancing from self-evident perspectives, in a process of alternating perspectives. It is worth remembering that the didactic principle of "change of perspective" is also a basic principle of intercultural teaching.

The intercultural significance of the exploratory community lies mainly in its potential, as an environment and as a practice of interactive search, to acquire experiences of reflection through the search for alternative perspectives. The pursuit of learning experiences of visual change is a predominantly intercultural learning pursuit as Dunkcer (2005) points out, it is characterized by the transcendence of the egocentrically limited view of things and, therefore, its transcendence leads to the opening of new perspectives. In the environment of the exploratory community, it becomes possible for students to observe their arguments and their self-evident perceptions from a relative distance. "A distanced contemplation of the world requires above all the overcoming of the simplistic and egocentrically limited gaze through a constant change of perspectives but mainly the observation of the world with" other eyes " that is, those of empathy" (ibid.).

The following principles of intercultural teaching and learning can play a supporting role in the practical implementation of the proposal to transform the classroom into a kind of intercultural exploration community. These principles constitute a proposal for the specialization of the general principles of organization of intercultural training from the critical point of view developed in the previous sections (Govaris, 2019):

⎯ The principle of indirect reference to cultural differences. According to this principle (see Diehm & Radtke, 1999), a fundamental condition for reference to cultural differences in the formation of a learning environment at the center of which are issues that are within the horizon of the learning interests and experiences of all students. The formation of a student-centered learning environment contains a strong motivation potential for the participation and interaction of all students, as specific individuals who are invited to submit their views, perspectives, interpretations, and knowledge. In such an environment of dense communication and creative interaction, the universal (e.g., in the form of a common reflection, a common challenge) can coexist, in a relationship of positive intensity, with the different.

⎯ The principle of recognizing experienced cultural differences. According to this principle, schoolgirls need to present and talk about cultural differences, which are personal experiences and therefore elements of their identity. These differences alone are pedagogically appropriate to talk to us, as they know them well and can explain them to us, in the context of a learning environment as outlined above. This principle is based on the theoretical position (Honneth, 2013) on the role played by the experiences of recognition, in the form of the social appreciation of our "particular knowledge", for the construction of an integral individual identity. In the example of the text, the parents' interest in telling the myth that the immigrant parent knows, functions as an essential source of gaining an experience of social appreciation.

⎯ The didactic principle of "multiple optics" (multifaceted view). This principle is closely linked to the two previous principles as it accepts and emphasizes the importance of each particular and personally meaning-charged perspective for building a universal type of knowledge in the context of intercultural encounters at school.

Given the above, we believe that the transformation of the classroom into an exploratory community can help build the key elements that make up intercultural competence based on a dynamic understanding of culture, cultural differences, the relationship between individual and culture, and does not overlook the reality of asymmetric social relations in a multicultural society. These data can be described in more detail as follows (Auernheimer, 2010· Govaris, 2005· Leiprecht, 2001· Govaris, 2004):

1. **Empathy:** The respective categories of discrimination, identification, and separation of "foreigners" are not arbitrary, are not occasionally invented by the subjects

themselves, but are the result of specific historical developments and social processes. Consequently, empathy can be defined as the ability to critically confront the social processes that lead to the stigmatization of immigrants and as the ability to recognize "others" not as strangers but as specific persons (Govaris, 2004). The "other" must be understood as a person acting in a specific context of possibilities and limitations that characterize his social living conditions. To the extent that the social conditions of action of the "other" are recognized as conditions related to "my" way of life, communication goes beyond the narrow confines of personal contact and is an attempt to reflect on the wider social relationships that affect the communication encounter and interaction (ibid.).

2. **Knowledge:** Knowledge about heterogeneity within cultural groups, knowledge about the processes of the social construction of categories, such as "ethnicity", "race", knowledge about the social functionality of stereotypes and prejudices. This knowledge can contribute to the deconstruction of the stereotypical image of absolute homogeneity of our group and consequently to the weakening of perceptions that wants the social space to be composed of completely distinct and solid groups. They can further support efforts to critically approach and analyze the role of collective identities as regulatory and value systems in meeting and communicating with "others".

3. **Values:** Values such as those of human rights, social justice, and respect for the basic rules of democracy, the acceptance of the "different". Awareness of these values and their use as tools for diagnosing the social pathologies that characterize the relationship between the majority and minority groups can help students understand the importance of basic forms of recognition, such as e.g., legal relations and solidarity relations, to maintain the internal cohesion of the subjects (Govaris, 2004· Honneth, 1992).

4. **Communicative ability:** Communicative ability allows individuals to communicate interpretively, that is, to discuss and communicate about problems arising from interpretations of cultural symbols and to analyze the general cultural and social conditions for conducting dialogues. In intercultural encounters, communication skills allow subjects to reflect on the conditions of communication, as they have been shaped through their socialization conditions, thus realizing both their own position and the position of others and to attempt on this basis the solving any comprehension problems (Eppenstein & Kiesel, 2008). We would argue that interpretive ability presupposes and expresses the ability to empathize. In this sense, at the level of intercultural encounter, the interpretive capacity is the basis for the creation of relations of recognition in the form of solidarity, as it creates the

conditions for the social appreciation of the "other" and consequently the basis for common identities.

5.2. Intercultural communication - the case of HEIs

Education is another field where intercultural communication is encountered and developed. Mobility in the context of transnational exchange programs at the level of both pupils and students is an important pedagogical tool for the development of skills necessary for the modern multicultural society. In other words, mobility and staying in another country is not just practicing a foreign language and learning about other cultures, but the ability for individuals to experience intercultural experiences, appreciating cultural differences, and approaching their own culture in the context of others. In this context, they can create interpersonal relationships and gain intercultural knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness on issues. However, the benefits of a mobility period depend to a large extent on the quality of the practices (Council of Europe Publishing, 2012).

Higher education institutions are undoubtedly spaces that are characterized by diversity with communication being a critical tool for academic benefits, but also the development of intercultural competence of students. In fact, transnational exchange programs are an effective practice that promotes the development of intercultural competence and therefore communication. However, they do not in themselves imply the development of intercultural competence. In particular, these exchange and collaboration programs provide the opportunity for intercultural experiences, both at the academic level by exploring perceptions and practices related to learning and in particular in the way it is exercised, such as tasks and forms of work, subject relationships (teacher-students) and ways of communicating with each other. At the same time, however, there is the possibility for intercultural experiences at the individual level to develop intercultural competence by interacting with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as a means of capturing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for successful communication in such multilingual and multicultural conditions. Staying in the host country and living communication with its citizens, as well as involvement in social and sporting events in the wider context of the university are characterized by multilingualism and contribute to the development of intercultural competence of individuals through identity negotiation (Foncha & Sivasubramiam). Even group work in the context of university courses is a good practice, as it gives the feeling of belonging to the subjects of communication, which in turn motivates them to share and exchange cultural perspectives together (Lee, 2011). Experiential activities that require the deposit of personal resources and experiences also contribute to the same direction. At the same time, communication with host university structures, but also with informal networks of volunteers is one of the most popular and effective practices in the context of student mobility. These networks are formed by students who have participated in

exchange programs aimed at assisting new students. Indicatively, some of their practices are the organization of social and sports events, but also excursions and guided tours (historical, cultural), to get to know and socialize students who move both with each other and with other students. Thematic events and workshops on various topics of global interest are also organized, to present a variety of perspectives and to launch a fruitful intercultural dialogue. Finally, the mediating role (buddy) that informally and voluntarily assumes each former participant in an exchange program upon his return to his country, is a practice that creates conditions for intercultural communication. In essence, the goal is to integrate the newcomer into the host city, helping in various areas, such as communication, searching for university structures, or information about the social life of the place.

Apart from these programs, however, there is a need for educational institutions to first recognize the need to prepare students for a globalized world and then to incorporate practices for this transition at home. This can only be done if educational institutions are open to society, thus giving students the opportunity to experience multicultural or multicultural experiences. Indicatively, practices of openness to society mean developing local relations with immigrants or with minority communities, contact with people with different languages, cultural and class backgrounds (Di Mauro & Bolzani in WeLearn, 2020).

Intercultural practice can also be characterized by pre-departure preparation programs for students hosting three universities and focusing on their language support to English, the common language and working language of most international institutions. This is logical, as in multilingual and multicultural spaces such as universities it is obvious that "no educational process is free from the influence of language, and so the role of language is central to any educational process", as well as in the preparation programs of students (Sivasubramaniam, 2004: 187). However, the emphasis on integrating the intercultural dimension into education for student mobility in a way that avoids essential and stereotypical perspectives, better prepares students for intercultural universities. This implies transcending national cultural characterizations, groupings, and identities in preparatory courses and focusing on the fluid, multiple, and complex nature of cultural groups and identities in such intercultural environments.

Mainly language preparation programs are also included in the mobility of students / three with a focus on the most common non-verbal communication elements (Council of Europe Publishing, 2012: 87). Specifically, students can become familiar with the language of the host country with the aim of effective learning, cultural communication, and a better understanding of the culture of the host country. In the same direction within the school where the mobile students are hosted / three practices that include their creative integration reduce the communication and cultural gap and create the conditions for intercultural encounter and communication. For example, joint actions and teamwork during the learning

process contribute to team spirit and create feelings of security and acceptance in students, while allowing them to share their experiences and identity. However, intercultural learning and communication are not limited to the school learning environment and activities during an exchange. Living with a host family offers great opportunities for intercultural experiences. For example, differences in housing, food, lifestyle, leisure activities, family rules, and even misunderstandings and tensions can be part of the experience and should be used as a valuable resource for learning during the intercultural encounter. Another practice that enhances the conditions of intercultural communication is the safety manuals given to students before their departure (Council of Europe Publishing, 2012: 72), to prepare them properly for their stay. Specifically, these manuals cover basic information such as what to do when someone is lost, traffic and hiking rules, emergency numbers that can be used in the event of an accident, illness, theft for students to understand how to organize and operate basic structures of the country to be visited.

But even in the case of inability to move abroad, students have the opportunity to take part in mainly English language activities through the international action "at home". This is an action aimed at home students with the aim of developing their confidence and ability in the effective use of English (or another language) (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018, opp.cit. in WeLearn). The actions directly or indirectly involve students in intercultural experiences, to develop intercultural competence.

Finally, in the context of students' mobility, there is also the mentoring practice. In essence, this is a role played by either a schoolteacher or an out-of-school teacher who is, however, responsible for addressing the emotional needs of visiting students. In other words, the mentor's task is to help the participant to integrate into the reception environment and to act supportively in case of difficulties, and to provide advice when needed.

Another case of intercultural communication that takes place in the field of education is the international school collaborations. This term refers to intercultural exchanges and other activities implemented in the educational context for students to get in touch and get to know partner countries and increase their understanding of their cultures, languages, stories, and especially their lives. there through collaboration programs. Primarily, schools can make a significant contribution to building feelings of solidarity through intercultural partnerships and exchanges. School collaborations should therefore be encouraged, as they contribute to improving the quality of the school, enhancing the teaching, and learning of foreign languages, and contributing to the social cohesion of European societies.

At this point, the most common practices of cooperation and consequently intercultural communication within the international school networks will be presented. In particular, peer-to-peer e-mail communication is the first and easiest practice due to technology. With

this practice, students can get in touch with peers from different parts of the world, to talk, thus eliminating possible hesitation in a foreign language. At the same time, it allows self-presentation, while the curiosity and reflection that arises from the conversations about the way of life, the country, and the culture of the interlocutors contribute to the realization of images of other cultures, but also of their own. Joint work, as well as the free use of whatever language students wish beyond the commonly decided working language, are key features of school collaboration activities. Another practice is the "partnership diary", which includes all the educational activities, as well as personal thoughts and feelings of those involved. In the same vein, mutually developed questionnaires, as well as the "collaboration newsletter" or a "collaboration video" are often practices used by teachers and students to capture the evolution of the partnership. In many cases, these intercultural activities are enriched by exchange visits, with lifelong communication contributing significantly to the development of intercultural competence. In this context, the practice of involving students in the preparation of the educational program before the guest students arrive by planning joint actions, workshops and events activates them and helps them to identify linguistic and cultural elements of the guests. Finally, in this case of school networks, the students are the ones who take on the role of mediator either as representatives of the host families or as guides to the school or the city.

5.3. Intercultural communication – the case of STEM in education and workplace

The term "STEM" is derived from the acronym (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) used in recent years in the educational community to express an interdisciplinary approach to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. In this field, science is studied not as a separate subject of the curriculum, but as knowledge and skills related to mathematics and humanities (Yakman, 2008). The goal is through experiential learning for students to get in touch with the process of solving a problem, to release their imagination and creativity, while cultivating their skills and critical ability (Hunter-Doniger & Sydow, 2016). Research shows that science courses that incorporate culture (art, music, social perspectives) enrich students' learning experiences and improve the emotional aspects of learning (Bak & Kim, 2014· Kim & Chae, 2016· Chu, Martin & Park, 2018: 1252).

In this field, intercultural communication and understanding is a factor that helps to arouse interest in the subject of target science, providing students with the opportunity to see the impact of scientific phenomena in an authentic context that is in a culture different from their own. STEM programs have a special potential for promoting intercultural competence and some universities have set ambitious goals to provide international engineering students with experience (Parkinson, 2007). Through communication and interaction with students

from different cultures, they can identify common elements, such as that the same scientific idea (e.g., seasons, light propagation, ecosystem, etc.) that they observe in their environment, they work in the same way in a different geographical and cultural environment. On the other hand, they may find that the same phenomenon or concept (e.g., because winter is not the same in both countries) occurs at different times of the year for groups of students/three other places. Therefore, this intercultural encounter, even remotely or even asynchronously through listening to cultural activities (e.g., times in other countries) is an authentic student experience that can increase motivation and interest in science (Chu, Martin & Park, 2018). Another potential benefit of intercultural interaction is that the experience of meeting students/three from different cultures increases awareness of the characteristics of the other culture without adversely affecting the positive attitudes formed during the interaction, creating shared knowledge and questions science with students from another culture.

More practically, an example from the STEM field with intercultural elements is this: students from different cultures begin to study a scientific concept by experiencing or observing a natural phenomenon in a sociocultural context. Then, through communication with the help of technology, they discover elements common or different, ponder and lead to a discussion of possible answers, having their previous knowledge as an adjunct, while the stage of experimenting to produce a substantiated answer follows. The integration of culture into the teaching and learning of science enables students to identify the role and relevance of science to well-known cultural events in their lives, something they cannot acquire through traditional teaching. More practically, through the intercultural activities that take place in this field, the capacity for "recognition of culture and development of respect" for other cultures is developed (Chu, Martin & Park, 2018: 1260).

6. Intercultural Communication in the work environment- the role of Diversity Management

Intercultural communication and interaction, other than a method of fulfilling our society's highest values and perspectives, has become a necessity for navigating the new social and economic reality, in the frame of globalization. According to the Oxford's Advanced Learners, Dictionary, "globalization" is defined as the fact that different cultures and economic systems around the world are becoming connected and like each other because of the influence of large multinational companies and of improved communication. On this occasion, we are led to the perception of our societies as ''multicultural'', with the escorting obligation to adjust and embrace collective transformations of the several communities within the process of interaction and exchange of cultural elements, ethics, and perceptions.

Additionally, population exchange generated by the wide spectrum of historical facts, globalization, migration, social and economic transformation in correlation with progress in the field of technology and communication (new channels and networks) are part of the new cultural distribution in spatial and intellectual level. The practical result is that the new ordinary in the workplaces is that the human capital in nearly every organizational level consists of individuals from several nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and religions.

The handling and effective valorization of this human capital, to eliminate conflicts triggered by defensive behavioral mechanisms to the ''new'' or ''unknown'' are summarized in the context of ''International Human Resources Management'', ''Diversity Management'' and the new aspects of organizational culture (Briscoe, Schuler, & Claus, 2009).

The initial communication practice that is stemming from Diversity Management Theory refers to ''Negotiating Reality'', to shorten the gap created by the diversities embedded in perceiving the world, having established beliefs, values, and a mentality of acting in specific ways, all as components of the cultural identity (Isotalus, E., & Kakkuri-Knuuttila, M.-L., 2018). ''Negotiating reality'' is about exploring the different cultural identities and experiential learning and training schemes in specific contexts that enhances interaction, having in mind that every person is a culturally complex being but at the same time uniquely shaped by his/her own experiences.

''Negotiating Reality'' as defined above should be a mindset following the structure of organizational culture in all separate steps, starting from the recruitment and onboarding procedures and being prominent to training and retaining strategies. Literature is very enriched to the methodology and customization of the specific tools facilitating the HR strategies and research activity is promising dynamic development of these fields in the future.

7. Methods and practices of Intercultural Communication- the case of Tourism as activity, educational context and workplace

The fields in which intercultural communication meets, including those of international relations, trade, tourism, social media, and education, are diverse and different from each other.

Initially, tourism is a field that creates and nurtures cultural contacts and exchanges between visitors and residents or professionals of tourist destinations. Places of the daily life of individuals are transformed into tourist destinations for a short or long period of time, highlighting them as potential places of intercultural encounters. Regarding these meetings, they are short in time, but also complex, as they are characterized by diversity and are

determined to a significant degree by the expectations, characteristics, and reasons for the visit of the subjects. In the context of intercultural communication in tourism, communication obstacles, misunderstandings but also negative activation of stereotypes can arise. However, a common element of both sides is the need for effective communication. Therefore, building intercultural capacity in tourism professionals is considered necessary to create the conditions for a successful intercultural meeting and communication. In this direction, some practices will be presented that can contribute to cultural awareness and understanding of cultural differences, not as a problem but as a resource to tourism executives, to work effectively in multicultural and multilingual communication situations (Grobella, 2015, as cited in Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020: 206). In particular, a practice that can contribute to the development of intercultural knowledge and skills necessary for proper and effective interaction with visitors from other cultures is the integration of basic principles of intercultural communication in the training programs of tourism professionals and the conduct of training seminars. In fact, the focus of these programs must focus on strategies for developing a positive attitude towards the linguistic and cultural diversity that is necessary for intercultural communication (Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020: 229), but also on the acquisition of cultural knowledge, i.e., cognitive information, about the people and context that prevail in a particular culture. In this way tourism professionals will be able to decode and interpret the behaviors and messages of visitors correctly, significantly reducing possible misunderstandings and misunderstandings. At the same time, the integration of conflict resolution strategies by tourism executives is a key part of their education. In fact, empirical data confirm the importance of these strategies, as the pre-planning of management strategies for potential communication challenges (Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020) equips professionals with the appropriate management skills.

Also, the focus of tourism programs, as well as the promotional material provided on the cultural and linguistic characteristics of tourists, is another practice of integrating intercultural communication in the field of tourism. More specifically, narratives, presentations, and promotional material of tourist destinations that will compose the individual cultural elements of a place in the form of a wider cultural landscape (Dimitrova & Chakarova, 2015), contribute to the sense of acceptance of visitors by the "natives" and lead to developing intercultural dialogue. At the same time, another practice found in the international literature and applied mainly by young executives in the tourism industry in multilingual and multicultural communication contexts is the **use of applied communication strategies of experienced colleagues as role models.** That is, they observe the way of communication (tone of voice, vocabulary choices) and behavior of colleagues and with what criteria they make these choices, they are consulted and after elaborating these practices they adopt them to respond to corresponding communication circumstances. Finally, the use of non-verbal methods such as body language and gestures to address the language barrier

is one of the most common practices in this field. Professionals and visitors alike try to communicate with all language and non-linguistic means.

8. Conclusion

Nowadays, the intensification of cultural contacts at both national and transnational levels (economy, tourism, work, immigration, internet, education) has formed a new communication condition. This is a situation that is particularly demanding in terms of conditions that must be met for communication to lead to positive results for the participants. The most basic condition is that of mutual recognition between "self" and "other". In theory, the issue of mutual recognition, which positively determines the effectiveness of intercultural encounter, can be ensured to the extent that communicators are intercultural competitors, which will allow them to understand and consider the ways of perceiving, thinking, acting subjects of the "other" culture.

A more detailed study of the relevant scientific discussion reveals divergent approaches both about the content of the concept of "intercultural competence" and about the proposed methods of building this competence. Some approaches do not take the context into account and define intercultural competence as personal characteristics. According to Straub, Nothnagel, and Weidemann (2010:17) the theoretical construction of "intercultural competence" is composed of different elements which refer to features, characteristics, knowledge, abilities, and skills of a person. Therefore, intercultural competence is defined and understood primarily as an individual trait, in the sense of individual communication ability, synthesis of knowledge, and positive attitudes towards "different" cultural norms. Central, in this case, is the view that intrapersonal factors are the ones that universally influence the outcome, positively or negatively, of intercultural encounters and communication. The person-centered concept of intercultural competence is found in most of the relevant literature. Without wanting to diminish the value of knowledge about the "culturally different" we cannot ignore the question of whether ethnic prejudices, perhaps the most important obstacle to intercultural encounters, constitute the result of a knowledge deficit for "others". Furthermore, we can support the position that equal social coexistence between indigenous peoples and immigrants, for example, is a pure communication problem, that is, a problem of communication bridging "cultural differences".

The definitions of intercultural competence that we have presented do not consider that processes, such as those of intercultural encounter and communication, are socially mediated processes. This means that the outcome of their outcome does not depend solely on individual traits. Therefore, can we define and support the development of intercultural competence, ignoring several social conditions that determine the "place" of intercultural

encounters and communication? If we do not consider, for example, the social inequalities that characterize the living conditions of immigrants, then there is a risk of interpreting differences and problems in our communication as the sole result of our cultural differences (Govaris, 2005). Any attempt to define the concept of "intercultural competence" as well as its analysis in the individual elements that compose it, must have as a point of reference the specific conditions of the intercultural encounter. The "different" always meet in a structured context of social conditions (e.g., dominant ideologies about migration and immigrants, about diversity and equality), articulate speech, and interpret facts and situations through specific social positions (these are characterized by possibilities and limitations) and corresponding identities (members of the majority or the minority) (Govaris, 2005).

In conclusion, today we are in a process of revising older theoretical conceptions of intercultural competence, which approach the concept of culture and identity in a static way. This is due to newer approaches that emphasize the dynamic nature of culture and highlight the dangers of reproducing stereotypes when this dimension of culture is not considered, as well as positions that emphasize the internal pluralism of each culture. At the same time, the nature of certain fields such as higher education, STEM, health, international trade, tourism, etc. contributes to this review, as they are characterized by interculturalism and require the development of intercultural competence through training. In other words, they enable individuals to experience intercultural experiences, create interpersonal relationships, to acquire intercultural knowledge and sensitivity. However, the quality of intercultural competence practices contributes significantly to a successful intercultural encounter.

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