

Available online at:

<http://proceedings.lumenpublishing.com/ojs/index.php/lumenproceedings>

9th LUMEN International Scientific Conference Communicative Action &
Transdisciplinarity in the Ethical Society | CATES 2017 |
24-25 November 2017 | Targoviste, Romania

Communicative Action & Transdisciplinarity in the Ethical Society

Role – Play and the Development of Intercultural Competences in the Academic Education Process

Carmen ALEXANDRACHE

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.03>

How to cite: Alexandrache, C. (2018). Role – Play and the Development of Intercultural Competences in the Academic Education Process. In T. Ciulei, G. Gorghiu (eds.), *Communicative Action & Transdisciplinarity in the Ethical Society* (pp. 19-26). Iasi, Romania: LUMEN Proceedings.

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.03>

© The Authors, LUMEN Conference Center & LUMEN Proceedings.

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

Role – Play and the Development of Intercultural Competences in the Academic Education Process

Carmen ALEXANDRACHE¹

Abstract

Problem Statement: In the context of intensification of the globalization and increase of the immigration process, the issue of intercultural communication has been generated many discussions and polemics which continue today. Generally, in the academic educational system the intercultural dialog is not presented as a distingue task because the accent of educational process is put on the specialization knowledge. Our paper present several problems like as: what can we do when in the university the students are from many different countries? What we do for their social, professional and cultural integration? What we need to do for their academic preparing, their learning process. How we encourage the communication, the relationship between the students, in especially with foreign students?

Purpose of Study: Our study starts from the premise that the better integration of the foreign students can be realized in the university if the intercultural competences are developed. In this ration, the professors have to prepare the activities focused on this perspective too. The paper proposes some practical educational solutions. Using the role-play like a learning method is one of them.

Research Methods: Our paper is based on the observations which made during the activities with students and the results of literature of social and human sciences, also.

Findings: The paper proposes some methodological aspects for develop the intercultural competences, in especially the communication competences and behavior We studied the Romanian curricula and we selected the best didactical ways to apply our observations in academic educational system.

Keywords: *Education; communication; intercultural; learning academic; culture;*

¹ University "Dunărea de Jos" of Galati, ROMANIA, e-mails: alexandrachecarmen@gmail.com, carmen.enache@ugal.ro.

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.03>

Corresponding Author: Carmen ALEXANDRACHE

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference



1. Introduction

The higher education is oriented towards preparing the students for a specific professional field, thing that is reflected in the curricula and in the analytical programmes. This is normal up to a point, if we are to think that this is the final step in one's professional training for a specific professional domain or job, after which there is the professional and, according to each one's choice, one's personal development. But this perspective of understanding the higher education imposes even another requirement: the need, expressed at the level of the labour market, to get connected to the present days reality and to its future evolution.

Certainly, the human mobility, more and more extended, has influenced the higher education; the number of the students who choose to learn abroad increased and continues to increase. A part of them will decide, after they finished their higher education, to integrate them and profess in the other cultural spaces. So, the student has to confront the dynamic processes that take place in the present days society, the large demographic mobility, and the increase possibility to go study/work abroad.

Therefore, the university must prepare its graduates to get integrated in this multi-/intercultural reality which presupposes accepting, relating and collaborating with people coming from different cultural and ethnical groups. This is why among the academic abilities, students must also gain the intercultural ones which will help them integrate better and more profitable from the socio-cultural point of view. The cultural differences will be perceived as means to discover and improve one's own person, a positive aspect in one's profession.

2. Theoretical Background

In brief, the intercultural competences designate the capacity to adapt to, relate and act in a different cultural environment [1]. Broadly defined, they represent:

- the capacity to solve issues related to intercultural interactions;
- the abilities to critical analyse and interpret, to relate with others;
- the openness towards learning a new culture and towards meeting people belonging to another culture;
- the knowledge of one's own culture and some other, the desire to deepen this knowledge;
- correct behaviours based on democratic and dialogue principles meant to encourage personal and intercultural relationships.

In the higher education, the intercultural competences can be developed in a perfect symbiose with the professional and social competences. These competences have the same values, attitudes and behaviors, as it can see in the Figure 1. The following diagram highlights more clearly these aspects.

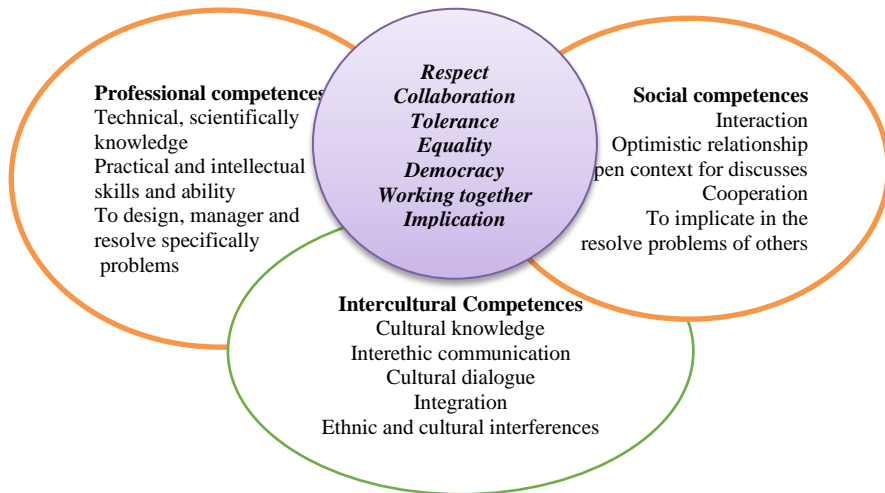


Fig. 1. Venn Diagram: Relation between the intercultural, social and professional competences.

Obviously, their efficient development is to be accomplished in an interactional environment determined by the elements that belong to some different cultural identities. Still, if there is no such learning context, then a useful thing might be to simulate it.

3. Argument of the paper

This paper proposes to underline the necessity cultivating the intercultural competences of the students from the higher education. This aspect must be an objective followed directly by every teacher. Next, the paper presents the Role play as the best didactical method to develop the intercultural competences from the professional and social integration perspective.

Our paper is a theoretical research that starts from the results which have been obtained by the systematic observation, oral and written interviewing of students (evaluation and self-evaluation). These notices have allowed the presentation of the didactical means to train and build-up the

communication and actions abilities needed in the integration of students in a different cultural space.

4. Arguments to support the thesis

We started this paper having in mind the idea of making learning activities more attractive for all students. In this respect, the Role play is great solution that we recommend it to be used for all subjects taught in University (it is well known that the students are less interested in hearing lectures, but they are interested in the practical activities, in the new, attractive ways of learning [2]).

Unfortunately, the Role play method is almost inexistent in the university subjects' curriculum as it might be observed if we are to analyze the subjects' sheets that are made public by some universities. The

Using the Role play method, the teachers can focus on the aspects that develop the abilities of students to communicate and to integrate in the scientific, professional environment, and also in the public one. The Role play method will make learning more attractive and dynamic for the students.

Role play allows students to practice new gestures, behaviour, emotions and new point of views in a communicational space ethnic and cultural inhomogeneous. In this respect, the students have the opportunity:

- to examine and analyse the critical incidents;
- to know and develop their knowledge about different ethnical and cultural communities;
- to interaction with the other;
- to resolve the learning tasks together;
- to reflect and evaluate own experience, emotions and attitudes after a learning activity held in a intercultural context (simulated or real one);
- to overcome the intercultural barriers (langue, judgements, stereotypes, discrimination, incapacity to paid attention to others, etc.

By means of interculturality [3], students will practice new behaviours, attitudes and new standpoints without the environment being a threatening or critical one. In this way they can learn how to interact in a specific situation with people pertaining to a different culture [4]. In this respect, we consider that the Role play is a way of preparation to the students for an international space to life and to work; they can identify with characters and realities sees them as real problems and perceives their situation as plausible.

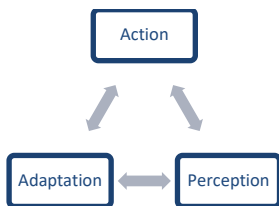
5. Arguments to argue the thesis

The Role Play is a learning method that allows students to learn something by playing a situation, to simulate a situation and learn about it. In the higher education, in the formal activities, the Role Play method can take the shape of the *Case-Study*, *Debate* and *Dramatization* method [5]. These didactical methods encourage the students to discuss few problems from a different perspective (each perspective represents one reality or one character, an action, a behaviour etc.). From the assumed point of view each student sustain and no sustain with argues some aspects which apart to him role that he plays (actions, opinions, attitudes, gestures, interests, ideas etc.). It is important that after played activity the students have to discuss about their emotions, thinking, solutions, attitudes etc. and they can give marks.

We propose two ways of use the Role play in the application and practical activities that can be developed in the higher education, in generally.

First modality: The use of Role playing in teaching the topics by means of behavioural interaction

This method reflects what the specialists call “teaching seen as a behavioural interaction”. According to it, the teaching process is built as a constant exchange of interactions between the teaching and learning behaviours. This aspect is illustrated by the following schema:



Action = Reaction (verbal and paraverbal communication, gestures, attitudes, behaviour)

Adaptation = the changes on the all levels of communication (verbal, non-verbal, paraverbal communication)

Perception = identification, interpretation of sensory information, signals and understand them

It is simple to notice that the teaching by the Role play method is a way of adapt to an interdependence relation between students - professor as actors, between their reactions.

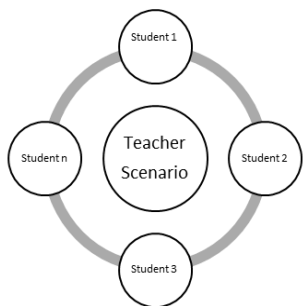
Starting from this perspective of teaching, we propose in Table 1 some models to use the Role play in the higher education.

Table 1. Models to use the Role play method

Type of	Interaction	Activity
Unequal	Interaction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher has the principal position in preparing the scenario and acting in it (not as an actor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students action according to the stimulus of their teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scenario total or partial established by teacher (theme, characters, situation/context of act) The scenario is changed by the teacher according the reactions of students The scenario that playing students; the teacher is a script writer or a mediator, a supervisor, an act intrigue generator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher has a minor role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students control the play act, but keep their teacher in it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scenario is built by both teacher and students The students play in the act without the indications of their teacher
Equal	interaction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher plays in the act with him students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students have the well-established roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role-play as: Debate Law Court; Activity in an enterprise; Employees of an enterprise; Personal business The students nonplayers are asked to watch to their colleagues-players, to notice the play act and to discuss about it and players actions and affective reactions of them. Complicating the play if the players want to do it.

Second modality: Learning by interacting with other students

This modality is a form of conducting learning. The professor's role remains still to be the one to prepare the learning material and to orient the learning process, but the learning in itself is done through student to student interaction. The modality of use the Role play method in a learning activity by interacting between the actors – students can be resume in the following schema:



Steps of students' action:

- **awareness of playing situation:** find out more cultural situation, perceive the differences and similitudes, learn about the relationships, values, rules, traditions from another point of view
- **ffective introspection, internalization:** they are sensitized of the differences, have the desire to communicate with others
- **reaction:** capacity to action, to communicate efficiently in a intercultural context which is created by the play-act.

As it can be notice, learning activity is a continuous flux of interdependent behaviours.

An important aspect of using this learning method is done by the organization the Role-playing activity. In order to be well prepared the students must:

- to think about what they will say and how they will do it;
- to adapt to the multi-intercultural context of playing act;
- to organize their speech, to put the ideas in the proper order etc.;
- to act, play out the conversation;
- to reflect to actions, motivations, gestures, attitudes, emotions, ideas showed by the playing students;
- to evaluate to one another (by the players and the nonplayer students, at the end of Role-playing activity).

6. Dismantling the arguments against

It is not easy to use in the learning activity the Role-play method. But it is more difficult *to evaluate the students' activity, their learning results*. This aspect discourages the teacher to apply this method in his didactical activity. In this respect, we think that it is necessary to focus on the following problems:

- the students have to know the directions of their evaluation before the play act to begin;
- the students and the teacher should use some evaluating tools;
- the students must be encouraged to reflect to their actions and thinking, and to fill some self-evaluating sheets.

Another problem is how *to motivate the students to participate* at the activity, to work together (they need to communicate to each other). In this respect, we propose that the students must be encouraged to read more specialized literature for understanding what they have to do, to make own clear view of the situational context (time, place, traditions, ethnical judges, etc.) and to use the information in tasks that simulate real-world.

Of course, our results have to analyse from a statistic perspective.

7. Conclusions

Role Play is one of the most attractive didactical technique [6] which is used specially in the activities with the children. In the higher education, this method is less used. On this educational level, the method must allow to students to expose own knowledge and to reflect on their cognitive and emotional experiences.

Using the Role play method to develop the intercultural competences, the responsibility of the student for his attitudes and behaviour towards the others from different cultural and ethnic spaces is better increased.

Professors may use Role play method without being intimidated by its ludic aspect and thus by the possible rejection coming from the students' part. An inconvenient might even occur during its use: the unchaining of some cultural frustrations or dissatisfactions which the professor might not know how to handle. If students are helped to understand them, they might even go at their personal level to solve them. To have intercultural abilities does not only mean to be able to sit next to someone different than you, but to wish to establish a more profound and durable rapport. The cultural differences must not be seen as impediments, but as a reality that helps in the complementarity of inter-human, cultural and professional relations..

References

- [1] Koselleck, Reinhart. *Conceptele și istoriile lor*. București: Grup Editorial Art; 2009.
- [2] Ionomescu Teodora Mihaela. *An Analysis of the Educational Activity in the Field of Physical Education in Romania*. *Vision 2020: Innovation Management, Development Sustainability and Competitive Economic Growth*, 2016: Issue 1: 3540- 3548.
- [3] Stiftung, Bertelsmann. *Intercultural competence – The key competence in the 21st century?*. http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bst/de/media/xcms_bst_dms_18255_18256_2.pdf.
- [4] Doncheva, Julia. *The Developing Functions of the Discussion Methods in the Teaching of the subject "Man and Society"*. National Military University, 2016: Issue 1: 87-94.
- [5] Jaques David. *Learning in groups. A handbook for improving groupwork*. Londra: Kogan; 2001.
- [6] Mara, Daniela. *Dimensiunile interculturale ale educației*. Transilvania. 2008: no. 1: 73-76.