

# Summary report on University

*Massimo Repetti*

## **1 Research plan and methodology**

### *1.1 Sampling*

The way in which we have preferred to review intercultural education in universities in the European Union (25 states) has been through sampling and enquiry, as opposed to utilising existing archived data; the intention was to bring in, if possible, new elements, as opposed to repeating known information.

The population of the present study is made up of 781 universities and colleges of the EU-25. Out of this population we extracted a large base to be researched, constituted by 331 universities i.e. 42,4% of the chosen population (which excludes smaller institutions and those not relevant to intercultural education e.g. technology, military, farming, etc.)

From the research base a sample of 80 intercultural education institutions was selected (corresponding to 24,2% of the research base); they were chosen on the basis of their relevance in the field of intercultural and cross-cultural studies, as provided in the universities of EU-25.

Starting from this sample, the study took into consideration the presence of an intercultural dimension across five large sectors of professional activity:

1. Education and training: pedagogic and didactic, university research.
2. Mediation and social regulation, mediation in the social-health field.
3. Intercultural communication: journalism and mass-media, business communication.
4. International relations: diplomacy studies, law, international cooperation.
5. Intercultural management: marketing, business management, human resource management, management of heritage (cultural, natural, for tourism); business internationalisation, languages.

## 2. Localisation offered in the subject studies

### 2.1 Education: intercultural competence in pedagogy and university research

Within the field of pedagogy and scientific university research in the EU-25, data acquisition reveals there to be a training path with a multidisciplinary perspective. Its aims are:

- to contextualise the students' reference frame, encouraging the move from ethno-centrism to ethno-relativism;
- to develop the students' capacity for observation and innovative problem solving within their professional sectors, through the knowledge and appreciation of cultural differences.

In the field of education and research, there coexist two main training paths, whose respective goals are:

- the development of tools for collaboration between universities, with the aim of encouraging exchange of skills and the creation of a homogenous university system (e.g. project Comenius 2004/2006 ***EMIL- Europäisches Modularprogramm für interkulturelles Lernen in der Lehreraus und fortbildung*** promoted by the Institut für Interkulturelle Kommunikation der Ludwigmaximilians-Universität München (Germany));
- the definition and theoretical-methodological development of tools for intercultural practice in the professional field of teaching.

### 2.2 Intercultural mediation in the health sector

In the educational field of intercultural mediation and social-health, the research has found a series of reflections and practices aimed at the management of situations which display intercultural exchange and ethnic identification. The institutionalisation of intercultural approaches in mediation encourages the development of localised actions in the field of social integration of immigrants, who face complex social expectations:

There are two main paths:

- Intercultural mediation with a social perspective, operating in the field of integration, assimilation and marginalisation;
- Intercultural mediation in the health sector, operating in the psycho-social and ethno-psychiatric field.

### *2.3 Intercultural communication*

The common area of interest in intercultural communication includes the discipline of human, social, and communication sciences; the areas of research and training place themselves in relation to the language of mass media, the discourse on truth, the relations between small linguistic communities, and xenophobia: the research also utilises the knowledge of innovative currents in communication sciences, such as the study of mass-media.

There are 3 great areas of application within intercultural communication:

- Mass-media oriented communication (journalism, advertising, audiovisual and multimedia productions); on this matter see the degree course (Ba Hons programme) ***Performing Arts: community development*** of the University of East London (United Kingdom);
- Communication in the management of international and commercial relations;
- Communication in language training.

### *2.4 The intercultural aspect in international relations*

Training in intercultural aspects of international relations implies a “dialogic learning” in respect to people from other countries, the mediation of cultural conflicts, the understanding of one’s own culture and that of the other, the interrelation between them, and a cooperation beyond cultural barriers.

More precisely, intercultural training has an impact on the following:

- Law studies in the fields of intercultural legal studies, social legal studies, international law, human rights and humanitarian law;
- Training relating to international cooperation in the sectors of: international aid, conflict resolution and peace studies, research on migrations and intercultural relations, diversity management;
- Diplomatic studies in the fields of: constitutional and administrative law, diplomatic and consular law, systemic global development, mediation in international relations: on this matter see the University training MA Social Sciences **Global Studies Programme** at the Institut für Soziologie dell’Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg (Germany).

## *2.5 Intercultural management within business internationalisation*

The collected data within the universities of EU-25 has shown numerous examples of intercultural formation (*intercultural training, cross-cultural training*) oriented towards the world of business.

Intercultural skills are considered as resources that are useful to the foreign expansion of businesses, with a direct effect on the balance between the prospects of development and the risks of operations in new markets.

The success of businesses resides in the ability to see cultural difference as an opportunity to be learnt and used; and in the capacity in developing an intercultural competence as part of one's business communication skills.

Intercultural training can have a diversified educational approach, based on the experiences and aims of the student: the cultural contents can be more or less specific, based on 'diversity management', on the evaluation of the role played by cultural differences in the determination of business management practices, and on the appreciation of social capital.

There are two large areas in which intercultural management and business internationalisation are practiced:

- marketing, management and cultural training, business communication, business internationalization;
- management of heritage sites (cultural, natural, for tourism)

## **3 Thematic balance**

### *3.1 Transnational networks and collaborations between Universities*

The analysis of the universities' capacity and tendency to form transnational relationships has been conducted on the basis of Comenius, from the Socrates programme: this is the EU's most important initiative for supporting intercultural education. The reason Comenius is of interest in our research lies in the fact that it is open to schools of all kinds and levels: it therefore allows us to examine how universities of the EU-25 participate in European programmes, and the degree of their involvement (as partners or leaders). In the last three years of its running, Comenius has funded 153 projects.

On 153 projects, the research has found that only 19 of them involved universities dealing with intercultural matters (that's 12,4% of all Comenius projects between 2003

and 2005); amongst them, only 8 were promoted by a university of the EU-25 (5,2% of the total).

This has to be compared to the number of relevant institutions (keeping in mind that the selected population of the study is made of 781 Universities and colleges – see 1.2.1); also, one of the 3 initiatives is designed for transnational projects for immigrant and intercultural education.

The data also shows the difficulty faced by universities of the EU-25 in collaborating within the Programme, as well as the even greater difficulty they have in promoting and managing the initiative.

### *3.2 Thematic balance: surveying constants and key elements*

#### *3.2.1 Reference areas for developing theory and methodology*

In most cases, the development of theory and methodology within intercultural practices is guided by the theoretical and methodological developments carried out in the research that privileges the relationships between perception, cognition (thought, reasoning) and culture: these take place mainly in the faculties of Social Science and Cognitive Psychology, in so far as these disciplines deal with strategies of dialogue and integration among different cultural communities.

#### *3.2.2 Constants within intercultural education*

The research carried out for *Interculture Map* has allowed us to identify a few constants within intercultural education:

1. The decrease of the distance between the approaches of educational systems, university curricular, and the representations of the different dominants within single countries;
2. The growing appreciation of the plurality of languages and cultures;
3. The appreciation of a formalised education for those specialising in the intercultural field, often through long distance teaching, especially in regards to languages;
4. The existence of an intercultural approach within global contexts (e.g. **Global studies programme**, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, see above), and in local contexts (e.g. **BA Performing Arts**, University of East London, see above), operating in contexts of everyday activity.

5. From a theoretical-methodological point of view: the participation of intercultural research projects in the change of perspective which is taking place within social and political sciences, where the attention is shifting away from the content of a culture to its borders; and where social agents are seen as representing their own cultural complexity.

### *3.2.3 Criticism of intercultural formation*

Many specialists' contributions have highlighted the way in which intercultural education in Europe can be considered as an incomplete field. Cristina Allemann-Ghionda (1999) in particular has underlined how “only rarely are the different intercultural education models put into practice in the Educational establishments in Western Europe, which are historically organised around a mono-linguistic and mono-cultural approach.”

Another recurring criticism is aimed at intercultural praxis within local contexts. Without denying any *savoir-faire*, it is generally admitted that the presence of the operator on the ground create an artificial situation compared to the everyday life of “Other” subjects, thus opening the road towards stereotypes and false understanding.

### *3.2.4 Future projections for intercultural education*

The constant presence of certain theoretical aspects in intercultural education within the universities of the EU-25 brings to light some key elements which will presumably have an influence in the years to come:

1. Enlargement: a shift from looking at inter-ethnic relations to looking at the differences in the social and cultural field;
2. Intercultural competence: learning skills that are useful to meeting another within an intercultural context, such as flexibility and an open mind;
3. Inclusive identity: the effort towards the development of skills which tend to orient and define themselves in relation to a “multi-referential” world.

Massimo Repetti is Content editor of The AnthroGlobe Journal (USA), and author for Elsevier Science Publisher, Fitzroy Dearborn Publisher, Routledge, and for many European journals on cultural identity issue.

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