INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE FUNCTION OF THE EUROPEAN VALUES PROMOTION

INTERKULTURALNI ODGOJ I OBRAZOVANJE U FUNKCIJI PROMICANJA EUROPSKIH VRIJEDNOSTI

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Abstract

A multicultural environment and a permanent necessity to adjust the education to the democratic standards of the European, culturally pluralistic society centralizes the issue of implementation of an intercultural education in the context of the European values promotion and support to a European dimension of education as a dominant guideline of the European countries' educational policies. The paper analyzes the results of an empirical research conducted among the undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate doctoral students of a course of studies in Pedagogy at the universities in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Czech Republic. The research results have demonstrated a significant impact of sociocultural factors on the degree of knowledge about an intercultural education objective, fluctuating from the basic principles of an intercultural education, based on an awareness about a possibility to be mutually culturally enriched, an emphasis on tolerance and coexistence of different cultures, an equal acceptance of culturally versatile individuals and groups, a reduction in stereotypes and prejudices, avoidance of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, up to an oppression to discrimination.

Sažetak

Multikulturalno okruženje i trajna potreba za prilagodbom obrazovanja demokratskim standardima europskog kulturno-pluralnog društva u centar pozornosti dovodi pitanje implementacije interkulturalnog odgoja i obrazovanja u kontekstu promicanja europskih vrijednosti i podupiranja europske dimenzije obrazovanja kao dominantne smjernice obrazovnih politika europskih zemalja. U radu se analiziraju rezultati empirijskog istraživanja provedenoga među studentima prijediplomskog, diplomskog i poslijediplomskog doktorskog studija pedagogije na sveučilištima u Hrvatskoj, Srbiji, BiH, Slovačkoj i Češkoj. Rezultati su ukazali na značajan učinak sociokulturnih čimbenika na stupanj poznavanja cilja interkulturalnog odgoja i obrazovanja, koji se kreće u okvirima osnovnih načela interkulturalnog odgoja i obrazovanja, temeljenih na osvještavanju mogućnosti uzajamnog kulturnog obogaćivanja, naglašavanju snošljivosti i suživota različitih kultura, ravnopravnom prihvaćanju kulturno različitih pojedinaca i skupina, smanjenju stereotipa i predrasuda, izbjegavanju etnocentrizma i ksenofobičnosti, te suprotstavljanju diskriminaciji.

1. Introduction

The idea of a European dimension of education, initiated in the 1980s with an intention to promote the European integration processes and facilitate mobility, communication, and cooperation in the European area, supported by the relevant documents of the Council of Europe and based on the principles of democracy, solidarity, social justice and human rights /1/, has evolved into a generally accepted concept and a dominant guideline of educational policies of the European countries during its genesis and various developmental phases. As a broad concept based on versatile complementary approaches that implementationally build an educational policy constituent of most European countries, the European educational dimension encompasses the development of the European society of knowledge while promoting mobility and enforcing the European values, among which interculturalism, multiculturalism, democracy, human rights, tolerance, social justice, respect of differences and pacifism are especially pronounced /2/.

Faced with a necessity to continuously adapt the educational systems to the globalization challenges, the contemporary European society aspires to promote the democratic principles in the European educational area, support the idea of a learning society and the tendencies for such a society to be marked by the democratic processes /3/, whereby education is being emphasized as a key factor of excellence and competitiveness on the European labor market /4/. In this context, a school is expected to provide for an education wherein an individual's general development would be in the function of knowledge, skill, and attitude acquisition necessary for a confrontation with the demands of a modern European society, of a preparation for mobility, communication, and coexistence in a multicultural Europe, and in the function of qualifying the juveniles for an intercultural dialog based on the preservation of proper cultural identity and cultural heritage determinants while simultaneously respecting and accepting the identities of others, observed from a European perspective.

As an intercultural perspective promotes the idea of cultural differences as a social value and richness, cementing the fundaments for a critical intercultural education that questions cultural diversity from a standpoint of equality, social justice, and inclusion as the basics for an edification of a democratic society, basic principles of an intercultural education are set on a reduction of stereotypes and prejudices, elimination of ethnocentrism and nationalism, suppression of xenophobia and discrimination, an emphasis on tolerance, unity, and coexistence of various cultures, an awareness about a possibility of mutual cultural enrichment, a stimulus of tolerance and solidarity and a promotion of nonviolent conflict resolution /5/. Bearing these principles in mind, the theoreticians of an intercultural education emphasize a necessity to prepare the school and teachers for a respect of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity based on the principles of human dignity and diversity respect, whereby the emphasis, put on an interaction in intercultural education, fully corresponds to a new professional identity of teacher /6/, whose intercultural competence in the realization of intercultural education will be based on a capacity to communicate, critically understand, and accept a proper culture and the culture of other inerculturally, as well as on a readiness to lifelong (intercultural) learning /7/.

As a democratic society should offer the possibilities to acquire knowledge and be qualified to its citizens during their entire life /8/, a lifelong intercultural learning/education is opined of as a basis for a continuous acquisition of the European values and an efficacious realization of a European dimension of education. In this sense, the most significant modifications in the segment of educational democratization and structuring of an intercultural curriculum (in a vertical axis of the European values) are reflected in a support to the competence profiles managing the pedagogical processes on a micro and on a macro level and to the modeling of new approaches to the organization of an educational activity that emphasize a sensitivity and tolerance to the different, respect of ethnic and cultural needs, and respect of human and minority rights /9/.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Problematic
As a modern concept, interculturalism is open to permanent questioning and adjustments to dynamic changes encountered by a present globalized society, marked by the encounters of members of various ethnicities, cultures, religions, languages and weltanschauungs, and bases its application on an implementation of intercultural principles in various fields of human activity,

among which education occupies a pronounced place.

An intercultural education finds its primary foundation in an awareness about a necessity to systematically support, promote, and develop relations based on mutual confidence and an efficacious intercultural communication between the members of various ethnicities, cultures, religions, languages, and weltanschauungs. A necessity to implement an intercultural education in the educational systems of the European countries, and in Croatia among them, has exerted its influence on an increased researchers' interest in the intercultural topics /**10**/, whereby the problematic of setting the objective of an intercultural education was discussed in the papers of some foreign /**11**/ and Croatian authors /**12**/. By virtue of their analysis, we may conclude that the basic objectives of an intercultural education are streamlined toward to the acquisition of basic notions in the domains of culture, understanding of culture of one's own and of the other, as well as of global cultural diversity, understanding of functioning principles of culturally pluralistic communities, development of an open and multicultural identity, cultural sensitivity and polyglot competence, understanding the consequences of discrimination against the culturally different, of the development of a non-stereotypical opinion and non-prejudicial attitudes, tolerance, and solidarity, and of qualification of the juveniles to critically approach the global culture.

The described goals of an intercultural education significantly contribute to the enforcement of a European educational dimension as a generally accepted concept and a dominant guideline of the European countries' educational policies, based on a respect and acceptance of the European values.

An empirical research, whose results are presented in the paper, is conducted within an international scientific project titled *Intercultural Curriculum and Education in Minority Languages*, with the objectives streamlined to the establishment of methodology and structure for the development of an intercultural curriculum and the definition of determinants co-constructing it, the examination of an intercultural competence and sensitivity, and the establishment of a degree of declarative acceptance of the European values.

With regard to the fact that the research, whose results are exposed in the paper, is a part of a larger project, a part of the results pertaining to the problematic of a degree of knowledge about an objective of intercultural education as a basis for an invigoration of a European dimension of education and a promotion of the European values will be explained in a follow-up.

2.2. Research Objective and an Initial Hypothesis

A research objective was to establish an effect of examinee's sociodemographic features on a degree of knowledge about the objective of an intercultural education as a basis for the enforcement of a European dimension of education and the promotion of the European values, whereby a starting hypothesis was that there is a statistically significant correlation between a degree of knowledge about the objective of an intercultural education and examinee's sociodemographic features.

2.3. Instrument and Procedures Data Processing

For the collection of data, the interview method was used, whereby the basic instrument applied a questionnaire developed for the project. This paper presents the processed data contained in the first part of the questionnaire, which incorporates sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, and a country of study) and a part covering the gamut of knowledge about an objective assessment of intercultural education. The scale contains 11 items, arranged in the form of statements evaluated according to a Lickert-type scale with five intensity degrees (1=completely disagree, 5=strongly agree).

The data processing procedures used a univariant, bivariant, and multivariant statistical analysis. To determine the descriptive characteristics of individual particles of the scale pertaining to an assessment of knowledge about a target intercultural education, descriptive parameters of the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and a minimum and maximum value were used. A construct validity of the scale was checked using the factor analysis, whereby a decision on the final number of factors was made based on the Kaiser-Guttman criteria for the extraction of factor roots and communality estimates. A comparison of respondents concerning sociodemographic characteristics was performed using the t-test and an analysis of variance, while a *post hoc* test (Scheffe test) was used for the determination of a statistical significance of differences between the groups.

An internal consistency coefficient of a scaled assessment of knowledge about a targeted intercultural education (Cronbach Alpha) amounted to 0.880, which, based on a high homogeneity of particles, suggests a high reliability of the scale.

2.4. Pattern

The study was conducted on a sample of 1,320 undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students of a course of studies in Pedagogy at the universities in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Czech Republic and Slovakia, whereof 47.5% were the students in Croatia, 23.2% the students in Serbia, 19 5% the students in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 6.4% the students in Slovakia and 3.3% the students in the Czech Republic. In a critical evaluation of results, restrictions were taken into account, being primarily derived from the sample structure (associated with an unequal number of respondents in the countries surveyed), as well as an impact on the variability of results and thus, consequently, on the significance of differences between the groups.

3. Research Results and a Debate

3.1. Knowledge about an Intercultural Education Objective

School, as a dominant place of intercultural education, knowledge transfer, and life experience, is perceived as a basic dimension of intercultural education, with an objective that it should be achieved through the realization of various specific forms of intercultural education. In the research, we were interested in the extent of our respondents' knowledge about the goal of intercultural education.

Table 1: Descriptive parameters of knowledge about an intercultural educational objective

TO WHAT AN EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DETERMINE A GOAL OF AN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION?					
Particle content	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
1. Knowledge and understanding of the basic features of other culture (norms, customs, values, language, symbols…)	1320	1	5	3.89	0.808
2. Development of capacities to understand and accept cultural diversities as values	1320	1	5	4.11	0.787
3. Development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different	1320	1	5	3.99	0.835
4. Awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to the culturally different	1320	1	5	3.94	0.927
5. Development of an ability of critical self-perception in an encounter with the culturally different	1320	1	5	3.73	0.903
6. Nonviolent conflict resolution	1320	1	5	3.68	1.035
7. A respect for and a preservation of a national cultural heritage	1320	1	5	3.78	0.945
8. A respect for and a preservation of a European and global cultural heritage	1320	1	5	3.68	0.941
9. Nurture of a sense solidarity to the culturally different	1320	1	5	4.08	0.824
10. Development of an open, multicultural identity	1320	1	5	3.95	0.921
11. Sustainable development promotion	1320	1	5	3.53	0.992

The results (*Table 1*) demonstrate the greatest arithmetic mean regarding a statement about the essential objectives of intercultural education, development of comprehension skills, and an acceptance of cultural differences (with the values amounting to M=4.11; SD=0.787), fostering a sense of solidarity toward the culturally different (M=4.08; SD=0.824). This is followed by the development of communication skills with the culturally different (M=3.99; SD=0.835), developing an open, multicultural identity (M=3.95; SD=0.921), an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to the culturally different (M=3.94 ; SD=0.927), knowledge and understanding of the

basic features of culture of others (M=3.89; SD=0.808), respect for, and a preservation of, a national cultural heritage (M=3.78; SD=0.945), development of abilities and skills of critical self-perception in an encounter with the culturally different (M=3.73; SD=0.903), nonviolent conflict resolution (M=3.68; SD=1.035), a respect for and a preservation of the European and global cultural heritage (M=3.68; SD=0.941) and a promotion of sustainable development (M=3.53; SD=0.992).

These figures indicate that students have highly ranked the acceptance of cultural differences as values, solidarity, and communication with the culturally different, a knowledge about and an understanding of the basic features of culture of others, an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to a cultural diversity and the development of an open multicultural identity as the essential goals of intercultural education. These goals greatly contribute to the adoption and promotion of the European

values as one of the dominant component of the European dimension in education. In a comparison of our study results with the data obtained in a similar one, conducted among students at the universities in Rijeka and Pula /13/, similar indicators can be observed, whereby the students consider the advancement of a sense of solidarity with the culturally different, the development of an ability to communicate with a different culture, a knowledge about and an understanding of the basic features of culture of others, the development of an ability to understand and accept cultural differences as values, and the development of an open, multicultural identity to be a fundamental goal of intercultural education. Slightly lower, similar to the students responses in our study, evaluated is a respect and preservation of the European and global cultural heritage, the development of abilities and skills of critical self-perception in the encounter with culturally different, non-violent conflict resolution, and the promotion of sustainable development. Starting from a fact that knowledge is not consid-

ered as a single dimension of education, as well as from a fact that school, in addition to a transmittance of knowledge, should also provide for a possibility to gain life experience that requires, *inter alia*, a positive school climate supporting collaboration and actively creating an environment wherein the differences will be respected and accepted, an important objective of intercultural education is directed toward the development of a positive attitude toward knowledge, or toward a new construction of knowledge that enables a formation and operation of an intercultural educational (school-based) community /**14**/. An intercultural education in this sense is a function of the realization of values pertaining to the care about others and the different, an openness to diversity, a respect for and an acceptance of diversity, as well as tolerance and solidarity. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the students involved in the research in a proper manner have perceived an importance of tolerance, solidarity, and understanding of cultural differences as a value and the chances of mutual enrichment as one of the most important principles of intercultural education, which forms the basis for an adoption of the European values as a dominant component of the European dimension of education.

3.2. Knowing the Objective of an Intercultural Education and Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Unquestionably, sociocultural factors can significantly affect the acceptance of basic principles of interculturalism and values that form a foundation of intercultural education, and thus the behavior of individuals in contact with the members of other and different cultures. In the research, we were interested in the extent to which gender, age, and a country of study affect the estimate of an objective knowledge about an intercultural education.

Table 2: Knowledge about an intercultural educational objective and respondents' sex

TO WHAT AN EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DETERMINE A GOAL OF AN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION?					
	M		**F**		
Particle content	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**t**

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1.	Knowledge and understanding of the basic features of other culture (norms, customs, values, language, symbols…)	3.79	.881	3.91	.799	-1.529
2.	Development of capacities to understand and accept cultural diversities as values	4.05	.841	4.11	.781	-.776
3.	Development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different	3.91	.884	4.00	.830	-1.113
4.	Awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to the culturally different	3.78	1.015	3.96	.916	-2.059*
5.	Development of an ability of critical self-perception in an encounter with the culturally different	3.67	.979	3.74	.895	-.842
6.	Nonviolent conflict resolution	3.67	1.113	3.68	1.026	-.123
7.	A respect for and a preservation of a national cultural heritage	3.74	1.012	3.79	.938	-.555
8.	A respect for and a preservation of a European and global cultural heritage	3.63	1.046	3.69	.929	-.724
9.	Nurture of a sense solidarity to the culturally different	3.97	.874	4.10	.818	-1.671
10.	Development of an open, multicultural identity	3.88	.863	3.95	.927	-.811
11.	Sustainable development promotion	3.47	1.039	3.54	.987	-.683

* $p < 0.05$

The t-test results (*Table 2*) demonstrated that the students presented a higher level of average stacking concerning all the offered statements that determine a target of an intercultural education. A statistically significant difference in the definition of the objective of intercultural education between the males and females is demonstrated in case of a statement about a major goal of intercultural education, awareness about the stereotypes, and prejudices about the culturally different (M=3.96; SD=0.916; $p < 0.05$), being in favor of the female students.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the students in general have evaluated almost all the offered statements that define an objectives of intercultural education with greater certainty. The study demonstrated a significant preference for the assessment of an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices about the culturally different, the development of communication with the culturally different, and an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices about the culturally different as important goals of intercultural education. These early results can be supported by the fact that the women in general, on the basis of their biological and psychological characteristics, have developed a more pronounced interpersonal skills than men, manifesting a significant tendency to empathy and cooperation, the development of a cooperative relationships, being more likely to "perceive" a style of communication and develop participatory relationships, exhibit emotions in an easier way, but are socially more vulnerable than men /**15**/. A more pronounced female tendency toward empathy and compassion with the others in relation to men is a part of the explanation of those results, demonstrating that the students in general have evaluated the essential goals of intercultural education with greater certainty if they were streamlined to develop an ability to communicate with the different cultures, fostering a sense of solidarity with the culturally different and a nonviolent conflict resolution.

Table 3: Knowledge about an intercultural educational objective and respondents' age

TO WHAT AN EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DETERMINE A GOAL OF AN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION?										
Particle content	(1) 18-20		(2) 21-22		(3) 23-30		(4) 31-51		F	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		p

1.	Knowledge and understanding of the basic features of other culture (norms, customs, values, language, symbols…)	3.76	.836	3.93	.779	4.02	.782	4.16	.767	8.493 **	1-2* 1-3** 1-4*
2.	Development of capacities to understand and accept cultural diversities as values	3.92	.829	4.13	.765	4.30	.689	4.53	.625	20.448 **	1-2** 1-3**1-4** 2-3*2-4**
3.	Development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different	3.87	.813	4.01	.834	4.12	.847	4.24	.830	7.529 **	1-3**;1-4*
4.	Awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to the culturally different	3.74	.967	4.00	.893	4.12	.878	4.33	.707	15.090 **	1-2** 1-3** 1-4**
5.	Development of an ability of critical self-perception in an encounter with the culturally different	3.52	.911	3.80	.869	3.91	.886	4.13	.815	17.389 **	1-2** 1-3** 1-4**
6.	Nonviolent conflict resolution	3.56	1.113	3.75	.978	3.73	.971	3.71	1.079	3.165 *	1-2*
7.	A respect for and a preservation of a national cultural heritage	3.73	.984	3.82	.894	3.76	.962	4.07	.915	2.153	
8.	A respect for and a preservation of a European and global cultural heritage	3.64	1.001	3.74	.894	3.64	.913	3.78	.927	1.375	
9.	Nurture of a sense solidarity to the culturally different	4.02	.882	4.11	.767	4.16	.779	4.02	1.011	2.152	
10.	Development of an open, multicultural identity	3.79	.942	3.98	.907	4.13	.852	4.07	1.009	9.699 **	1-2** 1-3**
11.	Sustainable development promotion	3.43	1.002	3.62	.960	3.54	.970	3.51	1.254	3.116 *	1-2*

** $p<0.01$ * $p<0.05$

The results of a variance analysis (*Table 3*) demonstrate that the oldest students, aged between 31 and 51 years, evinced the highest level of agreement with the statement that the goal of an intercultural education is a knowledge about and an understanding of the fundamental characteristics of another culture (M=4.16; SD=0.767), the development of an ability to understand and accept the cultural differences as values (M=4.53; SD=0.625), the development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different (M=4.24; SD=0.830), an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices about the culturally different (M=4.33; SD=0.707), and the development of abilities and skills pertaining to a critical self-perception in the encounter with a different culture (M=4.13; SD=0.815). The students aged between 23 and 30 years demonstrated the highest level of agreement with the statement that the goal of an intercultural education includes fostering of a sense of solidarity with the culturally

different (M=4.16; SD=0.779) and the development of an open, multicultural identity (M=4.13; SD=0.852).

The students aged between 21 and 22 years demonstrated the highest level of agreement with the statement that the goal of intercultural education determines a nonviolent conflict resolution (M=4.75; SD=0.978). The youngest students, aged 18 to 20 years, expressed the highest level of agreement in relation to none of the given claims. An analysis of these indicators suggests that the senior students (especially those aged 30 and above) have evaluated an estimated aim of intercultural education in most of the particles with greater certainty than the younger students. These indicators can be explained by a probably better information and higher levels of formal education and knowledge in the field of interculturalism, as well as by a greater life (intercultural) experience in various situations, which could significantly affect a greater certainty in the assessment of objectives of an intercultural education.

Also, we start from a fact that a knowledge about other cultures, associated with a linguistic competence and reflected in an ability to use a language in certain situations in order to achieve an awareness about individual thoughts and linguistic connotations /**16**/, is an assumed reason for a greater security of senior students when assessing the goals of intercultural education (especially in a higher agreement with the statement pertaining to the development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different, which is an important goal of intercultural education) may also be a result of a better proficiency in several foreign languages, which facilitates an establishment of contacts with the members of different cultures and an exploration of their cultural specificities. The results of the Scheffe test, applied in order to detect a statistical significance between the age groups (*Table 3*), showed that the students older than 21 years of age (categories 2, 3, and 4) may be more likely to perceive a higher level of average agreement with the statement that the goal of an intercultural education is determined by a knowledge about and an understanding of the main features of culture of others (M=3.93; SD=.779; M=4.02; SD=.782; M=4.16; SD=0.767; p <0.01), the development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different (M=4.01; SD=.834; M=4.12; SD=.847; M=4.24; SD=0.830; p <0.01), an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices about the culturally different (M=4.00; SD=.893; M=4.12; SD=.878; M=4.33; SD=0.707; p <0.01), the development of an ability and skill of critical self-perception in an encounter with culturally different (M=3.80; SD=.869; M=3.91; SD=.886; M=4.13; SD=0.815; p <0.01) and the development of an open, multicultural identity (M=3.98, SD=0.907; M=4.13, SD=0,852; M=4.07, SD=0.009; p <0.01). From these presuppositions, it may be concluded that a nonviolent conflict resolution and a promotion of sustainable development are the segments wherein the students younger than 20 years of age demonstrated a lower average agreement (M=3.56; SD=1.114; M=3.43; SD=1.002; p <0.05), but only in relation to the students aged 21 to 23 years (M=3.73; SD=971; M=3.54; SD=970; p <0.05), i.e., not in a relation to all age categories, as in the abovementioned statements. The analysis of these indicators suggests that more likely a higher degree of agreement with the average estimation of almost all available targets was stated by the senior students, i.e., by those over the age of 21 years, ex-

cept for the promotion of sustainable development, whereby the students younger than 20 years of age demonstrated a greater likelihood of a higher level of average agreement. A highlight on the promotion of sustainable development as an important objective of intercultural education in younger students can be explained by a fact that the issue of sustainable development is a relatively new field, began to be intensively studied in the second half of the last century, while the facilities related to the issues of sustainable development are just beginning to be established in case of the presented study programs of individual undergraduate and graduate students. It is therefore possible that an introduction of this issue is valued because of its representation in a number of cases, both in the individual high school programs and in some undergraduate and graduate student programs, thus approximating an interest of younger students.

The results suggest that there is a greater likelihood of higher average agreement with almost all of the listed objectives pertaining to intercultural education in the assessment of older examinees in comparison to the younger respondents, which centralizes a leading question of a need to intensify a continued strengthening of general intercultural and European values among the juveniles. Primarily due to a fact that the youth is a sensitive time when the individual is only being formed their own attitudes, values and value orientations and is subject to a variety of manipulations and influences /**17**/. An extent to which the young people will be willing to observe and experience the world in an intercultural perspective and promote the European values (not only on a declarative level but also in a daily practice), unless an individual is dependent on an entire schooling system that would vertically from early and preschool education, through the primary and secondary to the tertiary one, should include in the curricula an intercultural content and complementary approaches to interculturalism, taking into account an approach to the co-construction of an intercultural curriculum at all levels of a school system. Likewise, if intercultural education seeks to put a promotion of the European values in place, a European dimension of education should have a clearly defined role in the national education policies, with a clear structure and content of the definition of European values promotion in the national curricula.

Table 4: Knowledge about an intercultural educational objective and a country
  of studying

TO WHAT AN EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DETERMINE A GOAL OF AN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION?												
Particle content	**(1) Croatia**		**(2) Bosnia-Herze-govina**		**(3) Serbia**		**(4) Czech Republic**		**(5) Slovakia**		**F**	**p**
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**		
1. Knowledge and understanding of the basic features of other culture (norms, customs, values, language, symbols…)	3.96	.741	3,74	.956	3.84	.736	4.18	.815	3.92	.941	5.497 **	1-2** 2-4*
2. Development of capacities to understand and accept cultural diversities as values	4.22	.707	3,80	.941	4.18	.720	4.25	.781	3.86	.789	16.653 **	1-2** 1-4** 2-3** 2-4* 3-5*
3. Development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different	4.07	.754	3,72	.884	4.19	.790	3.57	.998	3.76	.996	17.666 **	1-2** 1-4** 1-5* 2-3** 3-4** 35**
4. Awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to the culturally different	4.01	.847	3,58	1.043	4.06	.882	4.43	.695	3.89	1.069	15.534 **	1-2** 2-3** 2-4** 4-5*
5. Development of an ability of critical self-perception in an encounter with the culturally different	3.81	.843	3,38	.953	3.85	.869	3.80	1.002	3.69	1.000	12.860 **	1-2** 2-3**
6. Nonviolent conflict resolution	3.73	.996	3.45	1.107	3.84	1.001	3.09	.960	3.68	1.049	9.328 **	1-2** 1-4** 2-3** 3-4** 4-5*
7. A respect for and a preservation of a national cultural heritage	3.80	.908	3.68	1.019	3.95	.899	3.14	.979	3.69	.964	8.644 **	1-4** 2-3* 2-4* 3-4** 4-5*
8. A respect for and a preservation of a European and global cultural heritage	3.70	.887	3.51	1.027	3.88	.892	2.95	.963	3.74	.966	12.508 **	1-4** 2-3** 2-4** 3-4** 4-5**
9. Nurture of a sense solidarity to the culturally different	4.22	.726	3.75	.973	4.20	.735	3.61	.993	3.92	.834	22.404 **	1-2** 1-4** 1-5* 2-3** 3-4**

10. Development of an open, multicultural identity	4.07	.857	3.64	1.037	4.02	.859	3.86	.765	3.72	1.053	12.203**	1-2** 1-5* 2-3**
11. Sustainable development promotion	3.55	.991	3.32	1.035	3.76	.843	2.59	.996	3.66	.970	18.193**	1-2* 1-3* 1-4** 2-3** 2-4** 3-4** 4-5**

** $p<0.01$ * $p<0.05$

The results of an analysis of variance (*Table 4*) demonstrate that the students studying in Serbia have the highest average stacking compared to the other ones, and the development of an ability to communicate with the culturally different (M=4.19; SD=0.790), the development of abilities and skills of critical self-perception in the encounter with the culturally different (M=3.85; SD=0.869), a nonviolent conflict resolution (M=3.84; SD=1.001), a respect for and a preservation of the national cultural heritage (M=3.95; SD=0.899), a respect for and a preservation of the European and global cultural heritage (M=3.88; SD=0.892), and the promotion of sustainable development (M=3.76; SD=0.843) are included among the essential goals of intercultural education. The Czech students demonstrated the highest average agreement in relation to the other ones, stating knowledge and understanding of the main features of culture of others (M=4.18; SD=0.815), the development of an ability to understand and accept the cultural differences as values (M=4.25; SD=0.781), and an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices toward the culturally different (M=4.43; SD=0.695) as the essential goals of intercultural education. The Croatian students, in relation to the other ones, emphasized fostering a sense of solidarity with the culturally different (M = 4.22; SD = 0.726) and the development of an open, multicultural identity (M=4.07; SD=0.857) with the highest average agreement. The students studying in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovakia did not corroborate any of the following claims with the highest level of the average agreement in relation to other students.

Unquestionably, an attitude toward interculturalism and an interest in the adoption of content in the field of interculturality significantly depends on a particular experience of the individual in contact with the people from other cultures, which is supported by the results of a research conducted by Kimmel and Volet /**18**/, confirming a significant impact of positive attitudes of students toward an intercultural interaction on the quality of intercultural experiences in the contacts within the culturally diverse groups. Also, the availability and amount of content in the field of interculturalism and "practicing real-life situations" in contacts between the culturally diverse people positively affects a level of intercultural knowledge, skills, and abilities, and thus a greater willingness to shape a worldview based on an ethnorelative orientation. Therefore, it is assumed that a certain amount of knowledge and experience in the field of interculturality is reflected with a greater security in respondents in Serbia, the Czech Republic, and Croatia when assessing the goals, which, in their opinion, are considered important for the implementation of an intercultural education if compared to the students studying in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovakia. Based on the results and the related indicators of a statistical significance of differences between the students in different countries, it is suggest that a greater likelihood of a higher average agreement exists in case of the students studying in Croatia, Serbia, and the Czech Republic, with the highest number of goals in relation to other students (*Table 4*); thus, it is possible to assume that these students possess more information about the topics in the field of interculturality when compared to the students studying in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovakia, which allows for a safer estimation. Besides the already mentioned facts, the importance of involvement of an intercultural content and complementary interculturalism approaches into curricula at all levels of the school system, observed is a need for a thoughtful approach to the co-construction of an intercultural curriculum, which should anticipate those pedagogical approaches and methods that will enable the creation of a critical sense of their own cultural identity and an understanding of diversity /**19**/; based on the obtained results, it is considered that special attention should be paid to the creation of specific forms of teaching, which should contribute

to the development (and education) for the desirable traits that include empathy, tolerance, solidarity, and an elimination of stereotypes, prejudice, ethnocentricity and xenophobia.

An interesting approach to the design of specific forms and teaching in an intercultural education is expounded by Kasikova and Valenta /20/, i.e., an intercultural approach to the teaching strategies, formed within the concept they call "an education with a positive attitude toward conflict," whereby a choice of a teaching strategies approach, in light of the creative ways of problem-solving skills and an increased capture of positive attitudes toward cultural differences, applies different techniques of dramatization.

In support of a need for a systematic consideration of specific approaches, content, and methods of work in an intercultural education, which should contribute to a more effective communication between the members of different cultures and an adoption of basic values of interculturalism as an important component of the European values, in the results of a research conducted among the students in Sweden /21/ it was evident that the students with the negative attitudes toward diversity express a need for the adoption of instructional content that will help them in a transformation of the negative into the positive attitudes toward diversity. The results of a research conducted among the students in Finland /22/ have shown that the students surveyed demonstrated an increased level of tolerance toward diversity subsequent to the completion of a course of studied containing the topics of interculturality. The results of a research conducted among the students in the Netherlands /23/ indicated a positive effect of cooperative learning and working in culturally heterogeneous (multicultural) groups regarding the group dynamics, a better understanding of diversity, and positive intercultural experiences.

Unlike Croatian, the Czech students and those studying in Serbia showed a higher level of knowledge about the objectives of an intercultural education when compared to the students studying in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovakia. In the context of various mobility programs, an exchange of students between the universities in the countries wherein the research was conducted provides for an effective possibility for the acquisition of a new knowledge and intercultural experiences. This approach could significantly contribute to the improvement of language and communication skills, enhance the real-life intercultural experiences as a basis for a better understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity, and ultimately strengthen a European dimension in education and the promotion of the European values.

4. Toward Conclusion

The results showed that sociocultural factors significantly affect the level of knowledge about a target intercultural education as a basis of the empowerment of a European dimension of education and the promotion of the European values, which confirms the initial hypothesis. In general, the level of knowledge about the objectives of an intercultural education in courses of studies fluctuates in terms of the basic principles of intercultural education, based on equality of all people, equal acceptance of the culturally diverse individuals and groups, avoidance of ethnocentrism, fight against all forms of discrimination, racism, and xenophobia, as well as the reduction of stereotypes and prejudices.

A perception of the goals of intercultural education ranges from the understanding and acceptance of cultural differences as values, solidarity and communication with the culturally different, and knowledge and understanding of fundamental features of the culture of other, through an awareness about the stereotypes and prejudices toward the culturally different, development of an open multicultural identity, nonviolent conflict resolution, and a development of abilities and skills of critical self-perception in the encounter with the culturally different, up to a respect for and a preservation of the cultural and global heritage and a promotion of sustainable development.

Given that young people, especially students, comprise that part of population that should eventually take the leading role in the building of a tolerant attitude and promotion of the European values, as well as of a European cultural and pluralistic society, a realistic assumption for the acquisition of basic knowledge and experience in the field of interculturalism and promotion of fundamental values of interculturality as an important component of the European values, renders, *inter alia*, the introduction of an intercultural education and a variety of complementary approaches (EDC, education on human rights and social justice, education for peace, global education ...) vital at all levels of a school system.

As a continuing need to adapt the European education systems to the democratic standards of the European cultural and pluralistic society centralizes a key issue of competence of an individual for

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coping with the changing conditions the modern life, strongly marked by the globalization processes, the conducted research provides for a basis for the consideration of a specific approach to the implementation of intercultural education, which will be a function of the adoption and promotion of fundamental values of interculturalism as an essential component of the European values and a significant determinant of the European dimension of education.

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/10/ Some of the research, conducted globally on a theoretical level, contributed to the definition of the basic principles, goals, and objectives of intercultural education (Bennett, 1986; Benson, 1987; Byram, 1997; Perotti, 1995; Porter, 2008), defining a concept of intercultural competence as a basic dimension of an intercultural capacity (Kim, 1991; Byram, 1997; Bennett, 1986) and developing a model for the acquisition of an intercultural competence (Bennett, 2009). The largest part of research conducted in Croatia so far dealt with the issue of education for intercultural relations, performed within a framework of scientific projects *Genealogy and Transfer of an Intercultural Model*, *School Curriculum and the Characteristics of the Croatian National Culture*, *An Intercultural Curriculum and the Education in Minority Languages*, *Education for an Intercultural Competence*, and *Intercultural Education and the European Values*. Their theoretical contribution has been reflected in the conceptualization of certain specific forms of intercultural education, while their results on a practical level have contributed to the modernization of an educational process through the modeling of various forms of intercultural communication, curricular innovation, and the improvement of quality of textbooks and teaching materials.

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