

Guidelines for the planning of the Summer School.

Introduction

This document, addressed to the project partners and to the network of stakeholders called to participate in the activities, aims to state the theoretical and methodological references in addition to the pedagogical-didactic choices which are the foundation of the Summer School project, project that is the main awaited product of the transfer of innovation “I-VET” initiative. Purpose of “I-VET” is to improve – through the strenghtening of the teachers, trainers, and principals' competences on intercultural dynamics management – the quality of the institutional system and the basis and lifelong learning teaching forms in Switzerland by consolidating a permanent exchange network between institutions that are active in the intitial and lifelong learning of the trainers on a regional, national and international scale.

“I-VET” is coherent with the indications of the Council of Europe regarding the emerging priorities of the educational systems. 2005 has been defined by the Council of Europe the *European Year of Citizenship through Education*. Several goals have been consolidated and they now orient the trainers and teachers' training¹.

- support and reinforce rights and duties of the citizens and their sense of belonging in their own society, based on respect for diversity, and the fundamental principles of the human rights and the pluralist democracy.
- prepare the youth to actively practice their role as citizens, reinforcing the democratic culture.
- contribute to the fight against violence, xenophobia, racism, and intolerance.
- contribute to cohesion and social justice.
- contribute to the reinforcement of the civil society, through the development of knowledge, of competences, and of awareness levels of the citizens.

Specifically, “I-VET” wants to contribute, on one hand, to the surpassing of the selection/marginalisation of young and adult migrants that characterize the *lifelong learning* system in Switerland and in Europe; and on the other hand, to the building of integration, inclusion and social cohesion paths through the access to training. The project also aims to delineate eduational conditions that are favourable to the building of intercultural competences, key competences to the promotion of an active citizenship. “I-VET”, operating directly in favour of teachers and trainers, promotes the transfer of innovation in relation to the pedagogical abilities and to the teachers' participation in elaborating study programs able to reinforce the intercultural comprehension and their students' acquisition of strong transversal intercultural competences.

This document reviews and discusses the characteristics of the starting model², in their strenght and pertinence, in order to highlight the need for adaptation of the approaches, methods and instruments

¹ “Educare alla cittadinanza democratica” documents are published on the website of the Council of Europe www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default_EN.asp?

² For details: Onorati M.G. – Bednarz F., *Building Intercultural Competences. A Handbook for Professionals in Education, Social-Work and Health Care*, Leuven, Acco, 2010

due to the shift in target : from young university and vocational university students to teachers and trainers who are active in the school and, especially, in vocational and lifelong training.

Intercultural competence

We define intercultural competence the conscious possibility to mobilitate knowledge, skills, behaviours, and values while facing changing and unfamiliar problematic situations derived from the encounter with people accustomed to a different culture with the common intention of finding new shared solutions.³

The most important aim of “I-VET” is to create a permanent Laboratory for the building and the consolidation of intercultural competences. The project takes a precise point of view on the characteristics of said competences and on their transversal nature in the professional fields. Intercultural competences are therefore part of an interdisciplinary profile, and do not refer solely to a set of notions, skills, attitudes and behaviours typical of the profile of a specialist in communicative mediation in transcultural settings. “I-VET” uses the polysemic concept of *interculturality* linking it to a characteristic or a quality that is essential to the teaching and learning professionals. They are constantly confronted with the complexity and variability of the relational contexts within which they work. They also have to help their students building social and cultural diversity management skills indispensable in today's society.

The holistic definition of intercultural competence tha “I-VET” made its own, and that portrays concrete personal expeereiences, includes several parts such as the **transformative approach** of the participants and the relational and, often, physical contexts within which they move and meet.

This is directly linked to a **reciprocity principle** that requires the availability to integrate elements that are part of the other's life and potentially to adapt one's own elements of life. The intercultural dimension thus describes situations characterized by the **experience of difficulty** and by the necessity to elaborate keys to the reading that are useful to the relationship with the other, in order to overcome said difficulty.

Emerging educative and learning needs

All of the reflection on intercultural pedagogy, the assumption is that the cultural origin (...) contributes to determine the individuals' behaviours in teaching and learning environments. More precisely, the assertion is that belonging to a different culture, a particular class or generation, determines in a more or less direct way different learning behaviours, often causing difficult interactions between the teacher and the student, but also amongst students themselves.⁴

Working in an everchanging and discontinuous society requires the teachers, the trainers and all the school and vocational training staff (the group of actors that we defined “teaching and learning professionals”), the reappropriation of the instruments and the strategies in the educative

³ Onorati M.G. – Bednarz F. – Comi G., *Il professionista interculturale*, Carocci, Roma, 2011, p. 29

⁴ Comi G., Bonoli, L., *L'interculturalité dans la formation des enseignants. Quel rôle pour un Institut de formation tel que l'IFFP ?*
On the occasion of the Intercultural Training Group Meeting of the Swiss Conference of Rectors of Universities of Teacher Education, COHEP, Berna, 2009

relationship, and in the mean time a redefinition of their own professional role.

Specifically, operating in the formative context, the teaching and learning professional must acquire the skill to mobilize resources useful to face the **discontinuity of the experience** and the **dissonant effects** that the different and the unknown create bursting into daily life. The intercultural competence can only be built by experimenting in practice the encounter with the other and with diversity, maturing experience through reflection and continuously (re)building, thanks to this process, one's own mental schemes. In order to do so, the training of trainers must be able to clearly define what a **practical experience** is, and within it which are the tasks of the teacher, the educator, the caregiver, who manages human resources and so on. Moreover, it is necessary that the educative personnel elaborates resources in order to recognize the role of the **subjective representation of the other** before even defining the difficulty as a possible *transfer of communication between cultures issue*.

Therefore, the intercultural competence is **situated** and **contextualised**. This means that the intercultural professional can recognize the specificity of the situation in which he or she meets the other. In order to participate in the building of the conditions of life of their time, teachers must be able to switch from a conception of culture built in the past to a future oriented vision, so to favour the anticipation of social scenarios to which prepare their pupils. This is an emerging formative necessity, determined by the professional's need to consider **culture as an ability to aspire**, adopting a critical anticipatory vision that allows him or her to interact in the processing of *possible scenarios*⁵. The multicultural condition is often thought to herald difficult situations in which to defend a status and welcome, integrate, accommodate others – carriers of other values, habits, projects. –

“I-VET” puts the objective to **show the opportunities embedded in the multicultural condition** and to **develop the attitude to work with the other** at the base of the teaching and learning professionals' reinforcement of intercultural competences, instead of considering it as an *object of observation* in which to invest, or a *control to do* to produce assimilation or passive and fragile adaptation of the subject that is “guest” in the context where the encounter of cultures takes place. The constant changing of social and political references determines the impossibility to obtain stable and longlasting results without the active and conscious involvement of the other. The same shifts of the political sensibility that guide the States' priorities and that inform their administrations prove the futility of *cultural politics* developed without the other and the frustration that comes from acculturation, integration, inclusion or welcome plans that can be modified by changes in power and sensibility. The need to identify and develop the citizenship concept as a vector for multiculturalism and attitude towards working with the other grows in this context of everchanging political sensibilities because citizenship can be represented as socio-political groups that interpret it as well as socio-political groups that are determined by it⁶.

Only a direct work, within the situation and with the actus actually present, allows to detect opportunities and determine results that are satisfying.

In order to consciously operate in education it is necessary to face one's own representations, **one's own behaviours** more or less **ethnocentric or ethnorelatives**, within a situation⁷. “I-VET” takes on as theoretically founded and desirable objective the evolution of the teaching and learning professionals' outlook from ethnocentric to ethnorelative positions. Such evolution is pursued in a logic of process and path, in proximal stages. The teacher's profile, as a socio-cultural agent, is represented then through the experience itself, as an actor of the integration process, able to create

⁵ Appadurai A., *Le aspirazioni nutrono la democrazia*, Milano, Et al., 2011

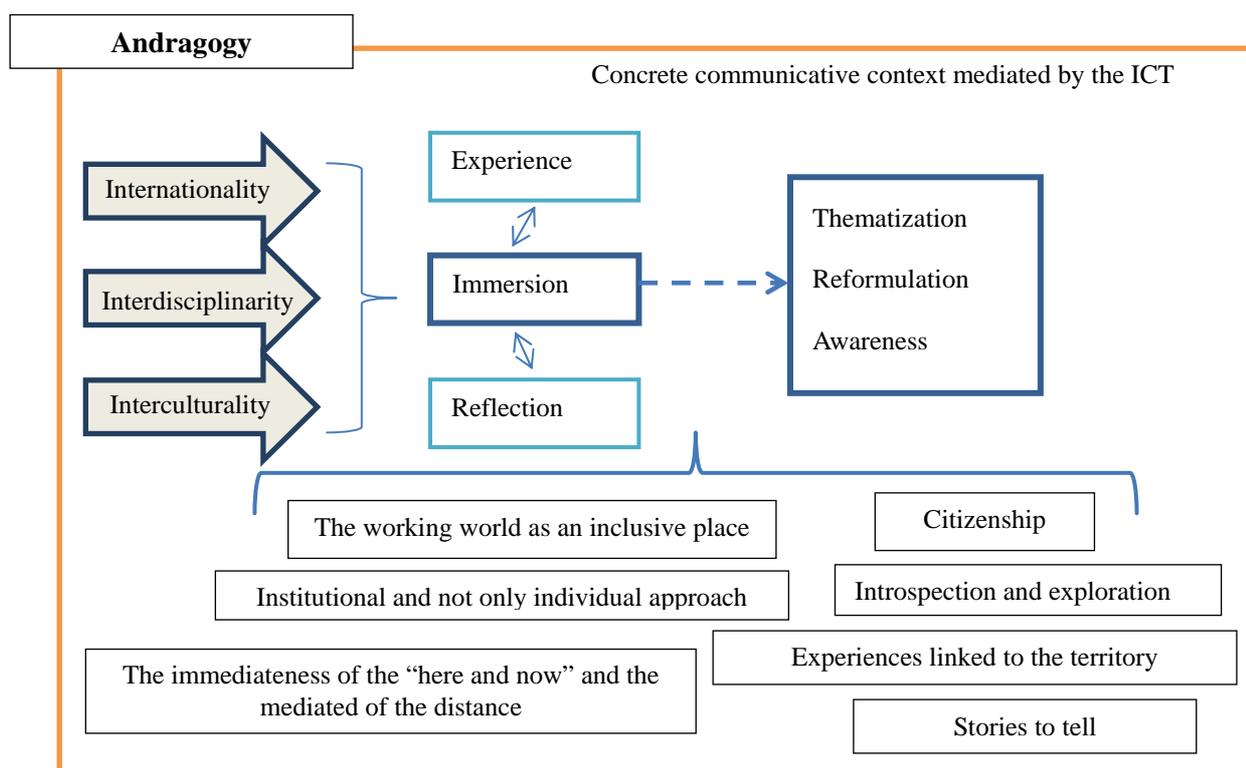
⁶ Heater, D. (2004). *World Citizenship*. London: Continuum.

⁷ Bennett M. (edited by), *Principi di comunicazione interculturale*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2002

bridges between cultures like a subject capable of moving amongst cultures.

The pillars of the stating model: building intercultural competences

“I-VET” values the model of education and building intercultural competences developed and successfully tested during the Intensive Program LLP “ICIC” (*Interdisciplinary Course on Intercultural Competences*). The graph allows to consider at the same time the different operational aspects through and image that defines at once the dyachronicity of the task to perform.



The model upon which “I-VET” is based is founded on three pillars:

- the **international** context of the exchange network, meant as a “privileged place of learning”
- the **interdisciplinary nature** as main reference for the definition of the professional profiles considered
- **intercultural** approach to the relationships that are established amongst subjects in training.

The relational and emotive intensity that characterize the model allows the full immersion in an experiential context where the “here and now” is given by the comparison/confrontation with the diversity that produces material for reflection. The reflective approach – in all of its complex implications – makes it possible to generate mental schemes able to integrate the diversity, through the thematization, the reformulation of the personal experiences, the building of a new awareness.

An approach that revolves around **experiential and reflective** learning fosters attention to the processes and the personal experiences, to the relationships and to the communicative forms that have been activated.

The intercultural competences building activity focuses on the participant and on his/her way of organizing the interaction with the other. In this situation, next to a reflexive approach the necessity to take responsibility, face one's own behaviours and make explicit one's own values is highlighted.

The model from which “I-VET” was born underlines thus the need to create non-linear learning situations, focused on disjunctural experiences that produce moments of cognitive dissonance and emotional and affective discontinuity (which explain the focus on personal experience). Such strategy aims to improve the ability to “notice” (attention and selection) and to “take note” (attribution of relevance), the ability to focus, thematize, place, and compare. An ulterior relevant step is to plan formative activities in which to transfer the acquired and the consolidated.

The formative strategy must consider the continuous comparison amongst peers, with actors on the territory where the activity takes place, and the experts of the specific contents, emergencies, problems and dilemmas. A “case study” didactic must consider the activity itself, the analysis of the experience, the reflection linked to it, and the exchange among participants for a definition of agreed upon lines of conduct.

Several fields shall be examined for their specificity, even though a common line might be defined as transversal to every aspect of social, institutional, and work relationships. The exchange on said lines of conduct and the explicit form of the specific relational forms of each field have to be considered as specific fields of the intercultural competences training: a

It is therefore necessary to consider the different aspects of the social, institutional, and work relationships. It is also necessary to consider the human relationships theme that is transversal to all of the aspects. An intercultural competence is thus built considering the human relationship theme in the different areas: **social** – in the families, with the neighbours, in the district, within local associations, and so on – ; **institutional** – administration, education, health care, and so on – ; and **work** – specific skills, customer service, concept of precision, punctuality, ecology, autonomy, team work, and so on – .

The reflexive approach is accompanied by a personal elaboration of personal written attestations – *story board* – that allows an exchange of data, impressions and reflections.

The *blended* format of the project, designed with face-to-face and distance learning activities through the use of information technologies and *social media*, allows to integrate different forms of sociality and communication that characterize our society in the interaction field activated by the model.

The creation of a glossary and other *outputs* characterize this training.

From ICIC to I-VET: (re)contextualizing the model

“I-VET” intends to transpose the lesson learnt from ICIC into an andragogic context. The **situation** seems to be the preferred formative environment for this modality, and the **experience** is the preferred didactic form. In an experiential learning process there are four determining passages: **to notice, to transform, to direct, and to generate**⁸. This learning modality, working with professionals, supposes their **active participation in the building of the formative system** and of the learning path. An intercultural outlook requires the active presence of indigenous actors in order

⁸ Piergiorgio Reggio, *Il quarto sapere. Guida all'apprendimento esperienziale*, Carocci, Roma, 2010

to work **with** people and not **on** people. A theoretical reference to our formative action must be situated in the field of cultural psychology and its applications in the educational field⁹. An inductive modality, in the training of trainers, in different professional fields, does not exclude the contemporaneous analysis of the lecture keys – the **conceptual and value theory frames** – that determine the comprehension of the situation and of the steps carried out within it. For this reason, the formative activity must consider, in changeable order, the different resources: cognitive, operative, and the aptitude level, that form the intercultural competence.

Here is the outcome in educational choices :

- the training professional is asked to participate and be active since the beginning of of the planning of the activity
- the experience is considered a privileged place of learning, in a *continuum* that changes regularly formal and structured training situations with informal moments of encounter or immersion, leaving space to forms of reflective reprocessing of the experience
- learning abilities are facilitated through the discussion and the restructuration of the mental schemes that guide our actions, and that make us read reality linking it to social representations based on stereotypes and prejudices; the transformative effect is handled favouring moments of encounter at the edge of social representation, and also giving great value to moments of metareflection and of comparison
- forms of cooperative learning that include the collaboration among participants and indigenous actors are solicited
- rhythms and learning objectives are respected; learning rhythms are determined by the interaction between the individuals and the context and among individuals themselves¹⁰
- the necessity to take an ethnorelative outlook is respected starting from the assumption of awareness that our cultural affiliation influences our thoughts and actions: the encounter with the other, crossing glances and comparisons, are considered moments of reflection and comprehension of oneself; the comparison is one of the keys to access the comprehension of the situation and of one's own being and acting within the situation as a base element for understanding and integrating the way of being and acting of others
- to this end there is thus the necessity for the surprise effect, the provocation, or the experience of the *unexpected* as elements of a didactic that offers disjunctural challenges capable to put the trainers' mental schemes in a difficult position (destructure and restructure), making them able to manage the unexpected and the unknown that happens everyday, for themselves and in the perspective of working with students
- the focus is on the narrative dimension of the reflection as a rereading of the experience through one's own biography and specific professional field, so to favour the awareness and the transfer to the common places of one's work;
- the objective is to build awareness of the action, and in this sense a profound competence rather than a mere set of abilities and pieces of knowledge; the

⁹ See Mantovani G., *Dalla psicologia culturale alla prospettiva interculturale*, in B. Mazara (edited by), *Prospettive di psicologia culturale*, Carocci, Roma, 2007

¹⁰ With the term *individuals* we mean all the people who interact in the project.

observation of one's own mental schemes and behaviours favours the self-evaluation of one's own intercultural attitude, intended as basis of one's awareness.

Anyway, the **experience** developed within the European project ICIC must be considered as a starting point for the work to carry out in the professional context and for the lifelong training of qualified professionals. From this we intend to retrieve:

1. the **emotional-relational dimension** of the learning process that led to important results on the self-reflection level and on the wider contextualization of learning processes
2. the **planning approach** that focuses on working in a group and the planning of events or productions
3. the focus on **case studies / specific cases / example cases**
4. the acknowledgment of **critical points** and the research for possible solutions using theoretical schemes, elaborated or inferred from the experience itself
5. the use of **reflection devices** intended as classifiers of the experience for a systematization in terms of knowledge

The model that we want to elaborate within the “I-VET” project, going towards an approach that is coherent with the *Summer School's* audience, takes into consideration **primarily prior experiences** of the audience itself, audience composed by qualified trainers with a complete training and a complex professional biography.

This consideration is key to the adaptation of the ICIC model through :

- A. the **andragogic** approach and the consideration of the interpersonal, social, and professional reality of the participants
- B. the **valorization of the experiences** of teachers and trainers as a starting point for future processing
- C. the **operational translation of the learning paths into the daily practice**, granting coherence between the participants' professional experience and the indications that will rise from the formative experience lived within “I-VET”
- D. the definition of a contact network able to build a **practical community / community of practice** with common interests that surpass the “I-VET” and that feeds itself on specific projects.