



Adaptation of Handbook for Development of Intercultural Competence: the Experiences

Julita Navaitienė¹, Daiva Račelytė², Violeta Rimkevičienė³

- ¹ Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Studentų St. 39, LT-08106 Vilnius, Lithuania, julita.navaitiene@leu.lt
- ² Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Studentų St. 39, LT-08106 Vilnius, Lithuania, daiva.racelyte@leu.lt
- ³ Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Studentų St. 39, LT-08106 Vilnius, Lithuania, violeta.rimkeviciene@leu.lt

Abstract. The present reflection article discloses the experiences gained during the adaptation of the material for intercultural competence development. The resource book *Building Intercultural Competences: A Handbook for professionals in education, social work and health care* was selected and its material was adapted to educational context of VET students and teachers. The framework of adaptation of the Handbook is presented in the article. The study was done to investigate the VET students' and teachers' needs for intercultural competence development.

Keywords: *intercultural competence, development, material adaptation, needs analysis.*

Introduction

The rapid process of globalization pose serious challenges in developing intercultural competence and the challenges are closely related to social cohesion, tolerance, dialogue and integration. Common aspects of various understandings of culture are the focus on commonality among culture members; on ideas that are transmitted across generations (in a societal sense, or in an organizational setting); and on culture being held at a basic level of cognition (Dickson et al., 2012). Intercultural competence becomes of ever greater importance as every contemporary person is either studying or working in different cultural environments. Intercultural competence has its definition as an appropriate and effective interaction between people who represent different affective, cognitive and behavioural orientation to the world (Spitzberg, Changon, 2009). Intercultural compe-

tence could be understood as “a set of abilities, knowledge, attitudes and skills, that allow one to appropriately and effectively manage relations with persons of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (Portera, 2014, 159). F. Bednarz (2010) summarizes, that intercultural competence could be defined as culturally-aware mobilization, managed by individuals, of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, enabling them to cope with unfamiliar and ever changing problems arising from encounters with people socializing in different culture, in order to find new and shared solutions. The author emphasizes the importance of intercultural awareness as the tuning of learner’s own behaviour according to the comprehension of other cultures, history and economics and the changes within society and culture.

Intercultural competence requires the integration of knowledge, skill, and behaviour, and should not be limited only to behaviour and attitudes towards ethnic-cultural minorities but it also should be aimed at all members of society (Görgöz, Van der Meirsch, 2010). Awareness of importance of intercultural competence increases, as the understanding of the purpose of intercultural competence ranges from economically-oriented applications to more academic or education-based perspectives, emphasizing human development aspects (Rathje, 2007).

The development of intercultural competence is the primary task of a globalized learning society in which the individuals study or work effectively while communicating cross-culturally. Intercultural competence could be developed over an extended period of time. It should be noted that the learning or working individuals are at different levels in their intercultural competence development. Special teaching materials could greatly contribute to the development of intercultural competence.

One of the most influential approaches to the development of intercultural competence is based on the development of intercultural sensitivity. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 2004) reveals the process of accumulation of experience and changes in the attitudes. It includes six stages of intercultural sensitivity development from the *Denial Stage* that is connected with stereotyping and culturally deviant behaviour, to the *Integration of Difference Stage* that is exposed by the internalization of multicultural views. The first three stages of intercultural sensitivity development (Denial, Defence, and Minimization) are ethnocentric stages, and the next three (Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration) are ethnorelativistic (Bennett, 2004). F. Bednarz (2010) defines seven phases of development of intercultural competence:

- becoming aware of cultural influences;
- becoming aware of stereotyping processes;
- recognizing and becoming aware of cultural shock;
- reflecting on one’s own cultural background;
- tackling a variety of cultural backgrounds;
- managing conflict in intercultural contexts;
- developing synergies in intercultural contexts.

The essential task of intercultural competence development could be accomplished through teaching and learning on the basis of methodological materials that describe the model of intercultural competence development process and the tools available and to be used in this process. When searching for the most appropriate existing methodological material, the twenty one books were revised as well. The evaluation of the materials we found was done according to the established criteria:

1. Matching of material to the learning goals of Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions.
2. Modernity and credibility of material.
3. Reliance of material on specific and successful teaching and learning experiences.
4. Clearness of material of how intercultural competence can be developed.
5. Sufficiency of material for development of skills, knowledge and attitudes.

The source book *Building Intercultural Competences: A Handbook for professionals in education, social work and health care* was written by scientists of Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Finland, Turkey and Hungary and it is intended for developing intercultural competence. This Handbook outlines the theoretical structure of intercultural education and the model of intercultural competence development, both based on concrete experience. The practice model of intercultural competence development was built on mobility and experiential learning implemented in the International Course of Intercultural Competences (ICIC). All didactic activities of this course are described in the Handbook. The Handbook is divided into three parts. Part One presents the theoretical background, Part Two focuses on the key methodologies and tools for the development itself, and Part Three offers the main methodologies and tools for monitoring and evaluating. The material of this Handbook was chosen for adaptation in order to respond to the need posed by the vocationally-oriented educational methodology applied in the best possible way¹.

The major focus was on the main **problem** of adapting effectively the materials of this Handbook, which was initially developed for the use in the fields of education, social work and health care, and we intended to use it in the field of vocational education and training. The aim of adaptation was to adjust the Handbook's material in such a way that it could be used in the VET institutions of Lithuania, Finland, Germany and Estonia.

The **aim** of this reflection article is to describe the experiences gained in the process of adaptation. The **objectives** of the describing the experiences are:

1. To clarify the main principles of adaptation.
2. To set out the layers of adaptation.
3. To describe the factors of adaptation process.
4. To reveal the results of needs analysis.
5. To present the framework of adaptation process.

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Methodology

The adaptation of existing material is valued as a faster and cheaper process than the process of designing and developing a new one (Kostolányová, Šarmanová, 2014). M. Brouwers et al. (2009) define adaptation as the modification of the materials which has been created in one cultural or / and organizational context with the aim of adapting it to the new cultural or / and organizational context. A lot of various adaptation process specificities were provided by researchers (Kumpfer et al., 2008; Petschauer, 2010; Ortega et al., 2012; Forbes, 2013; Shakouri, Bahraminezhadi, 2013; McGee, 2014; Saraceni, 2014; Simsek, 2014).

One of the steps in the adaptation process was to decide what changes were needed. The material must be adapted in such a way that students would not reject it as culturally inappropriate (Staley, 2014). It is evident that the adaptation of handbook for intercultural competence requires anticipatory assessment of intercultural competence level of target groups, educational frames and possibilities of adaptation material. Measures regarding the development of vocational education and training should be based on continuous competence development processes involving pupils, students and graduates from the perspective of lifelong learning (Mulder et al., 2006). Understanding of intercultural competence and development of intercultural competences in VET institutions is a complex multilevel task that presents a challenge by itself for trainers as well as for learners.

The process of specifying competences to be acquired by students, does not automatically result in the design of effective learning activities, and in developing competence-based education, it is essential that systemic attention is paid to the competence development of teachers and school managers (Mulder et al., 2006).

The conceptual approach to the Handbook's adaptation process was based on constructivist perspective. From this perspective, learning is viewed as the process of adjusting the environment to accommodate new experiences, and the teachers must integrate and organize teaching material to make learning an interactive and meaningful experience.

A. Cunningsworth (1995) defines important factors for adaptation of materials:

- The dynamic of the classroom.
- The personalities involved.
- The constraints imposed by syllabuses.
- The availability of resources.
- The expectations and motivations of the learners.

Adaptation of existing materials is the result of recognizing a mismatch between the teaching materials and the needs and objectives of the target group (Marand, 2011). Materials development refers to all the processes made use of by practitioners who produce or use materials for learning, including materials evaluation, their adaptation, design, production, exploitation and research, and as practical activity it involves the production, evaluation and adaptation of materials (Tomlinson, 2012). C. Troncoso (2010) states that

material developers have to consider variables, namely, the social, cultural and educational variables that will determine the type of materials to be designed. The following questions could serve as a guideline for materials adaptation:

1. Who, where, what and why (sociocultural context):
 - Who are the learners / who is the material intended for?
 - What, where, when and why is the material used?
2. What (views of intercultural competence)
 - What kind of intercultural competence description is presented in the material (form, function, and meaning)?
 - What theory / theories of intercultural competence should the material be based on?
 - What kinds of exercises / tasks are needed?
 - What teaching-learning techniques / strategies are to be used?
 - What skills are promoted?
3. How (perspectives of intercultural learning)
 - How does the material aid intercultural learning?
 - How should the content be organized within material?
 - How should the content be sequenced within material?
 - How does the material help learners develop intercultural competence?
 - How flexible does the material need to be?

Adoption of the material is the process of choosing and selecting materials, and, generally, the professionals do modifications of materials during adopting, so the process of adaptation and adoption has blurring boundaries (Marand, 2011).

Results

The main four principles of Handbook's adaptation were stated as follows: a) respect for and attentiveness to the material under adaptation; b) use of reliable methods of material adaptation; c) involvement of all users into the adaptation process; d) taking into consideration the users experience applicable when adapting the material, and e) effective cooperation with the initiators of the material under adaptation.

There were three layers identified in Handbook's adaptation: a) three separate parts of Handbook; b) the articles layer and c) specific fragments of articles.

The first layer of Handbook's adaptation was very important and required the review of all three parts of the Handbook. Some materials from the initial Handbook were omitted as not complying with the needs of VET students and teachers. Such review helped to save time for more intense content analysis of the remaining materials.

The preparation of the second layer of Handbook was related to the review of the articles which were presented in the selected sections. Some articles focused on the methodology

of intercultural competence development and they served for our purpose. Other articles were omitted after comparing their applicability to the needs of VET students and teachers.

The third layer of the Handbook's adaptation involved specific fragments of texts in the selected articles, with the aims of deciding which of them be adapted by using different adaptation strategies. According to Maley (2011) there could be singled out the following eight adaptation strategies:

1. Addition: adding the texts to the existing materials because of need to extend or explain these materials in case of inadequate coverage.
2. Omission: not using the existing texts because of inappropriateness or unproductiveness.
3. Reduction: shortening the existing texts to give them less emphasis.
4. Simplification: rewording the existing texts to make them more manageable for readers, but attempting to keep them more or less authentic.
5. Extension: lengthening the existing texts to present an additional information.
6. Rewriting / modification: rewriting the existing texts to make them more "communicative" and more accessible.
7. Replacement: replacing the existing texts (which are considered as inadequate) by more suitable texts from the other sources.
8. Reordering: changing the sequence of existing texts when it makes more sense.

The following five adaptation strategies were used in Handbook's adaptation respectively: addition, modification, omission, reordering, and replacement. The branching as adding options or suggesting alternatives to the existing texts, methods or tools was used in Handbook's adaptation too. Some materials of the Handbook were supplemented with the ideas and key concepts from other books and scientific articles. The development of supplementary materials was done by clustering information into logical groups, in close relationship to the materials used in the Handbook, and adding slightly different point of view to that of the Handbook. All additional Handbook adaptation strategies were intended to make the material more cohesive and better fulfilling the needs of the users.

The understanding of Handbook's adaptation factors was enriched by L. Petrides et al. (2011) findings, and these factors were specified as:

1. The material set out in the Handbook.
2. The users' attitudes towards the development of intercultural competence.
3. The objectives of intercultural competence development.
4. The specific aims and objectives of teaching and learning process.

Learning is likely to take place when there is a) extensive, rich and varied exposure to meaningful input in use; b) beneficial real life outcome; c) willing investment of effort; d) cognitive engagement; e) affective engagement; f) opportunity for hypothesis forming, trialling and revision; g) opportunity to use language for communication (Masuhara, Tomlinson, 2010).

Improvements to the adaptation process were made according to the recommendations given by M. Stein et al. (2001).

It must be noted that it was necessary to obtain the information about the needs of teachers and students of the VET institutions when adapting the Handbook's material. One of the main factors of the Handbook's adaptation was the need of the VET students and teachers for intercultural competence development. The study of VET students and teachers needs for intercultural competence development was carried out before the adaptation of the Handbook started. Its aim was to clarify the current situation, identify expectations and reveal opinions on intercultural competence development. The objectives of this study were to investigate the level of intercultural competence of the VET students and teachers in four EU countries (Finland, Estonia, Germany, and Lithuania), to disclose their opinions about the intercultural situation and intercultural competence development situation at their institutions, and to reveal their approach to the effectiveness of different methods used in the development of intercultural competence. Questionnaires were designed and administered to the students and teachers as the data collection instruments. The data were drawn from the sample of 101 students and 35 teachers from VET institutions in Finland, Estonia, Germany, and Lithuania. The analysis of study results revealed that only 21 % of students and 37 % of teachers perceived their institution as providing development in intercultural competence. However, it should be noted that 48 % of students and 55 % of teachers indicated the mixed-nationality study groups in their institutions. The complex problem was determined: there was the need to develop the intercultural competence, but the level of its satisfaction was low. The most popular methods of intercultural competence development were the International week (59 % of students) and International conferences (83 % of teachers). The level of intercultural competence was determined as moderate in both samples ($M = 42.28$ in students sample and $M = 57.51$ in teachers sample). The use of media was proved to be the most effective method for development of intercultural competence in students' sample and the reflective diaries – in teachers' sample. The special international course on intercultural competence was indicated as quite helpful in the development of intercultural competence (53 % of students and 71 % of teachers). Some suggestions were received from VET students and teachers for the improvement of their intercultural competence, frequent requests were expressed about the following: accumulation of experience when traveling and communicating with people from other countries in their own language, taking part in conferences, study tours, cultural events, making the international career, and reflecting social and communicative conventions and conflicts. The results of this study were taken into account by adapting the Handbook.

The following figure presents the *Framework of Adaptation* that is described as a step by step process of adaptation:

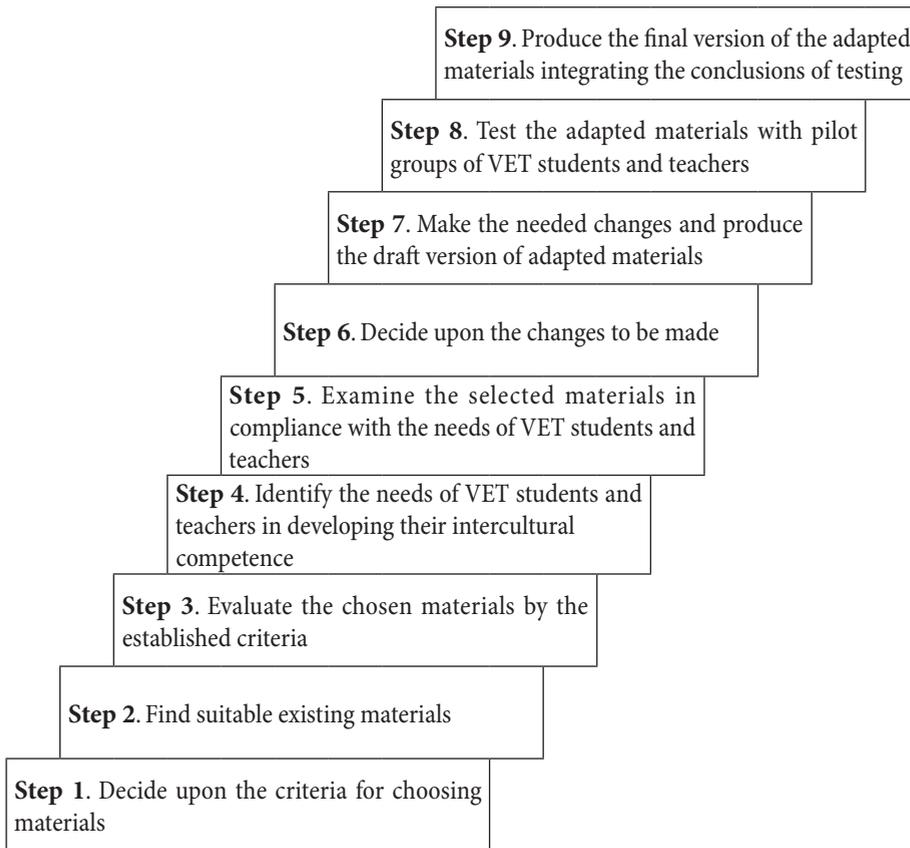


Fig. *The framework of adaptation*

The results of adaptation were presented in three newly developed and different user-oriented handbooks. The first one was about the methodology of intercultural competence development, the second was developed as the learning materials for the VET students and the third one was meant for the VET teachers. The testing of these handbooks is at present in progress at VET institutions in Finland, Estonia, Germany, and Lithuania.

The conclusions of this article could be useful for both scientists and practitioners who seek to adapt the learning and teaching materials and bring them into the context of different European countries, with different cultural and educational backgrounds.

Conclusions

The experiences of Handbook's adaptation disclosed the major advantages of the adaptation process:

The main *principles of adaptation* were clarified as follows: a) respect for and attentiveness to the material under adaptation; b) use of reliable methods of material adaptation; c) involvement of all users into the adaptation process; d) taking into consideration the users experience applicable when adapting the material, and e) effective cooperation with the initiators of the material under adaptation.

The *layers of adaptation* were set out as follows: a) three separate parts of Handbook; b) the articles layer and c) specific fragments of articles.

The results of VET students and teachers *needs analysis* revealed: the complex problem of the need to develop the intercultural competence and the low level of its satisfaction; the moderate level of intercultural competence in both samples; the viability of special international course on intercultural competence development.

The *factors of adaptation* were described as follows: a) the material set out in the Handbook; b) the users' attitudes towards the development of intercultural competence; c) the objectives of intercultural competence development; d) the specific aims and objectives of teaching and learning process.

The *framework of adaptation* was presented by nine steps as follows: 1) to decide upon the criteria for choosing materials; 2) to find suitable existing materials; 3) to evaluate the chosen materials by the established criteria; 4) to identify the needs of VET students and teachers in developing their intercultural competence; 5) to examine the selected materials in compliance with the needs of VET students and teachers; 6) to decide upon the changes to be made; 7) to make the needed changes and produce the draft version of adapted materials; 8) to test the adapted materials with pilot groups of VET students and teachers; 9) to produce the final version of the adapted materials integrating the conclusions of testing.

Based on the results of this reflection of experiences, it could be concluded that the adaptation of handbooks for intercultural competence development is related to different aspects of target material and target groups. Given that the investigated dimensions are important correlates of intercultural competence, it is possible for VET organizations to select appropriate teaching and learning material that will provide teachers with the possibility of developing appropriate level of intercultural competence in their institutions.

However, our reflection on experiences gained has certain limitations. These limitations include common method variance as all data came from one source – VET institutions INCOM-VET project partners. Moreover, the investigation of students and teachers attitudes was conducted on a small sample that may be not representative, thus the generalizations to other populations cannot be drawn. The results could be treated as pilot ones and also as the source for further investigation.

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Tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymo priemonės adaptavimo patirtis

Julita Navaitienė¹, Daiva Račelytė², Violeta Rimkevičienė³

¹ Lietuvos edukologijos universitetas, Ugdymo mokslų fakultetas, Raidos ir ugdymo psichologijos katedra, Studentų g. 39, 01806 Vilnius, julita.navaitiene@leu.lt

² Lietuvos edukologijos universitetas, Ugdymo mokslų fakultetas, Raidos ir ugdymo psichologijos katedra, Studentų g. 39, 01806 Vilnius, daiva.racelyte@leu.lt

³ Lietuvos edukologijos universitetas, Ugdymo mokslų fakultetas, Raidos ir ugdymo psichologijos katedra, Studentų g. 39, 01806 Vilnius, violeta.rimkeviciene@leu.lt

Santrauka

Spartūs globalizacijos procesai kelia asmens ugdymuisi siekinius, susijusius su socialine sąglauda, tolerancija, dialogu, integracija, t. y. su tarpkultūriniu ugdymusi. Šio ugdymosi kontekste tarpkultūrinė kompetencija tampa viena iš svarbiausių šiuolaikinio besimokančio ir / ar dirbančio asmens kompetencijų. Tarpkultūrinė kompetencija apibrėžiama kaip tinkama ir veiksminga sąveika tarp žmonių, kurie atstovauja skirtingai afektinei, kognityvinei ir elgesio orientacijai į pasaulį (Spitzberg, Chanson, 2009). Šveicarijos ir Italijos mokslininkai parašė knygą „Tarpkultūrinių kompetencijų formavimas: vadovas švietimo, socialinio darbo ir sveikatos priežiūros specialistams“, kurioje išdėstė tarpdisciplinines, tarptautines ir tarpprofesines šios kompetencijos ugdymo galimybes. Tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymo vadove pateikiami tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos teorinė struktūra ir praktinis jos ugdymo modelis, paremtas konkrečia tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymo patirtimi. Buvo iškeltas tikslas – adaptuoti šią tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymo priemonę taip, kad joje pateikiama medžiaga būtų naudinga Lietuvos, Suomijos, Vokietijos ir Estijos profesinio rengimo institucijoms. Adaptavimas yra greitesnis ir pigesnis procesas už naujos priemonės sukūrimą. Adaptavimas apibrėžiamas kaip modifikavimas priemonės, kuri buvo sukurta kokioje nors kultūrinėje ar organizacinėje aplinkoje, kad būtų galima ją pritaikyti skirtingose aplinkose. Adaptuojant Tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymo vadovą buvo laikomasi keturių principų. Adaptavimas vyko trimis lygiais. Adaptavimo proceso metu buvo atsižvelgiama į būsimų vartotojų poreikius, kurie buvo ištirti prieš pradedant adaptavimą. Adaptuojama medžiaga buvo pertvarkoma pagal vartotojų poreikius; nenaudojama, jeigu neatitiko vartotojų poreikių; papildoma, kai vartotojams trūkdavo informacijos; trumpinama, jeigu informacija vartotojams atrodė per daug plati; paprastinama, jeigu vartotojai jos nesuprasdavo; struktūrinama, jeigu to reikėjo dėl vartotojų poreikių. Adaptavimo rezultatas – metodinės ir ugdymosi priemonės studentams bei dėstytojams. Šių tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymosi ir ugdymo priemonių veiksmingumas testuojamas Lietuvos, Suomijos, Vokietijos ir Estijos profesinio rengimo institucijose.

Esminiai žodžiai: *tarpkultūrinė kompetencija, raida, medžiagos adaptavimas, poreikių analizė.*

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