



Intercultural Learning: Know- How Enhancing Intercultural Competences and Cultural Awareness of Teachers

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The aim of the article is to share experience in fostering development of the intercultural competences of teachers in Lithuania by transferring know – how and the best practices from foreign educational institutions.

The article reveals long term cooperation with Italian, Spanish, American, Turkish educational institutions and intercultural learning benefits to the teachers of the Lithuanian university of Educational sciences (former Vilnius Pedagogical university) and to the language teachers of secondary schools of Lithuania.

The best practices and know – how in foreign language teaching/learning methodology were brought to the University from the United States of America (Grand Canyon university) 19 years ago, later from many other countries. Interactive and communicative methods transferred to Lithuania, “Train the trainers” and other practical courses provided to the Lithuanian teachers by foreign teachers - native speakers – and their input in building up intercultural competences are briefly described in the article. These unique and long term intercultural learning/teaching examples prove that effective communication and the interaction of language and culture are vital in fostering understanding and tolerance among people throughout the world and it highly enhances development of intercultural competences and intercultural awareness of teachers.

During the twenty years of independence of Lithuania tremendous and significant reforms have been carried out in the system of education and the University of Educational sciences, being the main and major institution for pre- service and in – service teacher training always has been in charge of development of teachers’ competences. At present University Professional competence institute is involved in EU projects dealing with the development and assessment of teachers’ competences, their requalification, teaching quality measurement (MELIOR, ect.) and together with the partners from Austria, Spain, Portugal, Great Britain investigate ways and create means for fostering the development of intercultural competences and cultural awareness.

Intercultural awareness is to be considered one of the key competence for a language teacher. What about the other subjects’ teachers? The article provokes a discussion on the development of a teacher’s intercultural competence and cultural awareness, following Claire Kramsch concept:

[If...language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed as enabling language proficiency...Culture in language teaching is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing].