

Article

Interreligious Competence (IRC) in Students of Education: An Exploratory Study

Assumpta Aneas ^{1,*}, Carmen Carmona ², Tamar Shuali Trachtenberg ³ and Alejandra Montané ⁴

¹ Department of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education, Faculty of Education, Universitat de Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebron, 171, Campus Mundet, 08035 Barcelona, Spain

² Department of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education, Faculty of Philosophy and Educational Sciences, Universitat de Valencia, Avda. Blasco Ibáñez, 30, 46010 Valencia, Spain; carmen.carmona@uv.es

³ Department of Theory of Education, Faculty of Teacher Education, Catholic University of Valencia-San Vicente Martir, Calle Sagrado Corazón, 5, Godella, 46110 Valencia, Spain; tamar.shuali@ucv.es

⁴ Department of Didactics and Educational Organization, Faculty of Education, Universitat de Barcelona, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebron, 171, Campus Mundet, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; smontane@ub.edu

* Correspondence: aaneas@ub.edu

Abstract: (1) Background: The purpose of this study is to present a scale for the assessment of interreligious competence (IRC) and to make a first descriptive appraisal of future educators, focused on their capacity to cope with conflicts. (2) Results: The relationship between IRC and strategies to cope with conflict is noteworthy. Significant correlations have been found between interreligious competence and coping strategies, mainly in emotional IRC. (3) Methods: A survey study included 1175 undergraduate students in educational science. Descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses were performed. (4) Conclusions: The IRC scale received empirical support regarding its validity and reliability and contributes to the repertoire of assessment tools which facilitate quantitative analysis of IRC. The results demonstrate that one's ability to manage the emotional climate that arises from conflict and interaction with others is in part explained by three types of coping associated with emotional IRC. Coping with conflicts due to involving individuals from different backgrounds, particularly in terms of religion, requires a multifaceted and culturally competent approach. Developing interreligious competence is crucial in fostering understanding, mitigating tensions, and promoting emotional and harmonious coexistence.



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Keywords: interreligious competence; scale; coping conflict; university; education; interreligious dialogue

1. Introduction

This paper presents the findings of a survey study on interreligious competence (IRC) among university students in the field of education in five Spanish universities. This study is part of a broader project 'Stories that Move, Upscaling good practice' funded by UE ERASMUS+, sub-program Support for Policy Reform (621431-EPP-1-2020-1-NL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN), aimed at training young people in preventing and combating identity-based hostile approaches and discrimination, such as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, through a blended learning and open access training resource called 'Stories that Move' (Stories that Move 2023).

Interreligious dialogue is the focal concept that should influence policies, strategies, and programs that advocate citizen cohesion built on a culture of peace encompassing religious differences. Lehmann (2020), who analyzed the interreligious dialogue (IRD) movement developed in Europe, highlighted that throughout the past two decades, IRD has become an increasingly significant dimension of present-day societies. The author distinguishes between two main trends in this field. On the one hand, there are the activities associated with the IRD movement. These activities, which include the interfaith movement

(Fahy and Bock 2020), the multifaith movement (Halafoff 2013), interreligious dialogue in education (Sabariego et al. 2018), and interreligious cooperation (Boehle 2018)—bring together initiatives, networks, and organizations whose focus is the promotion of interfaith relations and cooperation. On the other hand, the notion of IRD has entered the political arena. For example, IRD has been integrated into official policy documents of the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the Council of Europe (CoE) as well as other international bodies (Banchoff 2012) such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC), which addresses the promotion of interreligious and interfaith dialogue.

Our study follows the first of the aforementioned approaches to IRD. Specifically, it addresses the dimension of IRD in education (Sabariego et al. 2018). This approach conceives education as a key strategy in the development of a democratic, inclusive, equal, and dialogical citizenship so as to achieve social cohesion. Educational initiatives within the framework of this approach can be of any type (formal, non-formal, or informal). They can be integrated into all types of curricula and educational levels and may target any kind of group: students, professionals, families, communities, political, social decision makers, and so forth). IRD in education can comprise diverse content such as history, political and human-rights education, religious and cultural heritage, and civic education, as already stated in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (WPID) (Council of Europe 2008).

Following a series of summits and conferences organized since the 1990s, the CoE came to explicitly endorse ICD (at the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government, Warsaw, May 2005) as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society (Council of Europe 2008). Since then, the promotion of ICD has been a major political priority of the CoE and was integrated in a project in the context of history, teacher education for democratic citizenship, modern foreign languages, as well as religion and educational policy. The ‘Faro Declaration’ (October 2005) adopted by European ministers for cultural affairs placed the strategy for the promotion of ICD in the context of the overall efforts of the CoE to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as to strengthen social cohesion. In 2006, the Committee of Ministers launched the preparations for the WPID. The aim of the WPID process was to identify how to promote intensified ICD within and between societies in Europe and dialogue between Europe and its neighbors (Council of Europe 2008). It aimed also to provide guidance on analytical and methodological tools and standards. The WPID is addressed to all stakeholders that are in a position to promote ICD in Europe, that is, policy makers and administrators, educators, the media, civil society organizations, including migrant and religious communities, youth organizations, and social partners. The publication of the WPID ‘Living together as equals in dignity’ (2008) was a highlight of the European Year of ICD. The WPID formulates the political orientations of the CoE in the area of ICD. Given that the CoE has published very few white papers in the past, the publication of the WPID is considered an important event. The recommendation CM/Rec 2008-12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religious and non-religious convictions within intercultural education suggested some practical measures for the implementation of the WPID in educational settings (Birzea 2008). These measures include: (1) the promoting a model of schooling that is inclusive, open to all, and free of discrimination; (2) introducing new teaching methods and approaches, such as cooperative learning, phenomenological, multi-perspectivity, and dialogical approaches; and (3) developing intercultural competences as a key part of in-service training of teaching staff. In summary, a competency-based approach was advocated (Barrett 2012; Kolb 2021; Morgan and Sandage 2016; Sri Eko and Putranto 2019). At this point, it is important to remember that competence development is a core dimension in European curricula and education systems, from primary education to higher education (Heitmann 2005; Montané and Aneas 2010; Priestley et al. 2021; Serbati 2015). Competences for intercultural and IRD are considered by the EU curriculum as transversal competencies. The transversal competencies taught are considered to be fundamental throughout the

different schooling periods as they focus on developing students' humanistic views and civic values (Aneas 2003; Mukhidova 2023; Tsankov 2017).

This study explores the issue of education and religion from an interdisciplinary approach, analyzing the contribution of several academic fields. In line with Horsfield (2007) and Morales (2011)—who analyzed the ontological and epistemological conceptions about religions, subjectivity, and objectivity—we agree that: (1) all the religions hold universal assumptions and establish a clear dichotomy between subject and object; (2) despite the enormous diversity, it is to a greater or lesser extent always possible to find some conceptual convergence between different beliefs; (3) religion is the belief in a spiritual and invisible world, either deep within the human being (immanent) or outside the human being (transcendent), which is not subject to physical space–time laws; (4) God, as the principle of everything that exists, whether personal, transpersonal, or impersonal, is something that is also present in practically all forms of religion, albeit there are clear differences between theistic, polytheistic, and non-theistic religions regarding their particular vision of divinity; (5) the duality of knowability–unknowability inherent to the nature of God, as a reality, is beyond human knowledge; and (6) religion includes the belief in the existence of goodness and evil as objective facts. Even though in some non-theistic religions the foundation of morality lies in the human being rather than in abstractly established precepts, the existence of basic principles is recognized, and the latter constitute ethical rules in order to safeguard certain universal values. By realizing the intersubjectivity and paradigmatic complexity present in these different approaches, we consider that the cultural approach of the religion can pragmatically sustain a common framework to define an educational model of IRC which can serve both educational and psychosocial intervention purposes. This position aligns with the position of Birzea (2008), who also established the role of culture in the cultural approach to the foundation of intercultural and IRC, and is also compatible with Pedersen (1997) and Banks (2009). These authors were among the first to establish a comprehensive definition of culture in terms of ethnicity, religion, social class, age, and gender. They considered all these categories as culture because each one of them provides knowledge, practices, assumptions, and beliefs contributing to the creation of collective and individual identity. This perception of religion in terms of culture implies that religious traditions and interactions can be studied through the lens of intercultural theories (Abu-Nimer 2001; Holm et al. 2011). Exceptions to this approach can be found in models of spiritual intelligence (Martín-Sánchez et al. 2020), spiritual and religious competence (Johns 2017; Young et al. 2002), and spiritual competence (Robertson 2010), which do not align with this cultural conception of religion. Some models that integrate religion and culture in their competency development include those of Aneas (2003), Deardorff (2015), Barrett (2012), the UNESCO Framework for Intercultural Competences (Leeds-Hurwitz 2013), the PISA Global Competence Framework (OECD 2018), and the RFCDC Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (Council of Europe 2018). All these models present a set of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values, whose integration and implementation, by responding to the characteristics and needs of the context, would result in competent intercultural and interreligious behavior.

This is particularly relevant to teachers, as they are the facilitators and responsible for the development of competences in their students. Therefore, teachers should develop these competences and put them into practice in order to facilitate the respectful exchange of perspectives between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, on the basis of mutual understanding and recognition, as well as behaviors that respect the needs and sensitivities of the interlocutors and the context. Shuali et al. (2020) synthesized Barrett's (2012) analysis of the challenges teachers need to address that would provide a context for the application of these competences:

(a) Challenges associated with the fact that members of different cultures tend to live separately in parallel communities that have only minimal contact and interaction with one another, generating mutual ignorance and mistrust. This reality is being transferred to, or reflected in, the educational environment and conditions both teacher and student

interaction and peer interaction. Addressing this fragmentation in educational settings requires inputs from teachers' knowledge on different cultures and the significance of their tradition as well as the management of the negative emotional states that often surface when these minimal interactions between people and groups identifying with different traditions take place. (b) Challenges associated with individual educational environments that rarely deal with social fragmentation and do not address individual needs for building an alternative shared collective identity. This shared construction has to essentially integrate experiences of mutual practices. In other words, go beyond words and information and live, practice, share practices, traditions, and spaces with others. (c) Challenges associated with stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion. (Shuali et al. 2020, p. 12)

The response to this statement is closely linked to a well-founded knowledge and the application of critical thinking with regard to one's own community as well as that of others. This is why a transdisciplinary integration of this knowledge is so necessary, in which other traditions and knowledge beyond Western scientific knowledge are also recognized and valued (Gibbons et al. 2012; Nowotny et al. 2001). This integration of competences responds to the principles of the Paris Declaration (OECD 2018, p. 7) which states that *"The primary purpose of education is not only to develop knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes and to embed fundamental values, but also to help young people in close cooperation with parents and families—to become active, responsible, open-minded members of society"*. The purpose of this educational approach is to achieve engagement and a sense of belonging to society, by playing an active role in any setting and context, including a religious one; in other words, to have children, young people, and adults feel that they are citizens and can act as such in society.

In this paper, we focus on IRC. We refer to IRC when we focus on the person and their ability to: (1) talk about religion and spirituality with people of a different religious position; (2) engage in the practice and/or study of religious traditions that are not their own, without losing their own point of view; and (3) manage the emotional climate that arises out of this interaction and experience. IRC (Aneas et al. 2023) is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that is performed in contexts of practice, community relationship, or education, that can be *"contexts in which there is interaction of an exclusionary, antagonistic nature, loaded with prejudices and stereotypical conceptions"* (Abu-Nimer 2001, p. 686), and can be developed, like all the competencies, through experience and/or education (Tenreiro Rodriguez et al. 2020). Through the Stories that Move Project, which is a blended-learning educational resource that can be used to develop intercultural and IRC in adolescent students, we were interested in how students of educational science position themselves in relation to religion, as well as what experiences and competencies these future educators have at their disposal in order to undertake these educational initiatives involving IRD. The majority of these young university students have been raised and educated in a secular state that still retains its Catholic cultural tradition, a state that is experiencing difficulties—just like a large number of European countries—in harmonizing compliance with these guaranteed legal frameworks (freedom of worship and the right to receive religious education) while encountering the prejudices and current sociological trends that swing back and forth between an increase in radicalism and the decline in the number of followers in religious communities (Griera 2020; Lehmann 2020; Vilà et al. 2020). In the absence of any educational efforts in university classrooms, these positions, beliefs, and competencies will remain unconscious, yet they will be expressed through prejudices, discriminatory behavior, and all the possible cumulative behaviors that will emerge as major barriers to developing an educational and social community in which everyone feels accepted, recognized, and involved as citizens. For all these reasons, the current descriptive and exploratory study was undertaken with the following aims: (1) to find out the position of these students in relation to religion, through their own expressed views; (2) to explore the degree of IRC expressed by a sample of educational science students from different

universities; and (3) to detect possible relations between IRC and coping strategies aimed at helping to determine how to deal with conflicts in university classrooms.

2. Methods

2.1. Sample

The study sample includes a total of 1175 students (923 women, 241 men, and 11 non-binary) enrolled in educational science at Spanish universities (91.3% enrolled at public and 8.7% at private universities). The public universities involved were the University of Barcelona, University of Granada—Melilla Campus, and University of Valencia, while the private universities involved were the Catholic University of Valencia and European University of Madrid. The average age of participants was 21.73 ($SD = 4.42$). This strong presence of women is a common feature in education studies in Spain and other European countries. Participants were involved in Social Science degrees as Teacher Education, Educational Sciences, Pedagogy and Psychology) and master's degrees in these fields.

2.2. Context of Implementation and Instrument

An individual self-perception questionnaire was administered to participants with the aim of characterizing the competencies of the future educators with regard to religion. The questionnaire included: (1) information about demographic data; (2) an IRC scale (Aneas et al. 2023); and (3) a coping strategies scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000).

The implementation was carried out as part of a curricular educational activity in various subjects of the bachelor's and master's degrees of the previously mentioned universities. In all these subjects, the development of competencies for multicultural contexts was established as a learning outcome. Some of these subjects were Inclusive Education, Intercultural Education, Human Rights and Citizenship Education and Counselling, and Diversity in Education. The degrees providing the framework for the theme were: Early Childhood Education for pre-service teachers, Primary Education for pre-service teachers, Psychology, Social Education, and Pedagogy. Data were also collected from students on a number of master's degree programs in Education, such as Psychopedagogy and Education for Citizenship. The questionnaire was administered as an initial activity, in which students were asked to reflect individually on themselves and their position in relation to the interaction between different religious positions as well as the way they usually face conflicts emerging from such situations. Subsequently, a two-hour session was devoted to the training resource *Stories that Move*. This resource, developed by Anna Frank House and funded by the European Union, is a toolkit for the development of skills to manage and prevent identity violence. At the end of the activity, which included individual, small-group, and large-group activities, individual learning reports were collected from the students. In these reports, each participant reflected on both their assessment of the educational resource and the learning achieved. In this article, we focus on analyzing and understanding the descriptive statistics and relation between IRC and coping strategies.

2.3. Descriptive Statistics

This study considers the need to acquire empirical information on IRC with regard to students of education and explore the relation of these competencies with their strategies of coping with conflict. The IRC scale (Aneas et al. 2023) is a self-reporting, 12-item questionnaire which uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and assesses three dimensions: (1) behavioral IRC (i.e., 'I adapt my behavior according to the cultural and religious context in which I find myself'); (2) emotional IRC (i.e., 'I find interacting with people from other cultural and religious groups stimulating and enriching'); and (3) cognitive IRC (i.e., 'I have been integrating principles, values and practices from other cultures or religions into my life').

The coping strategies scale (Frydenberg and Lewis 2000) used in this study is the short general version that contains 15 items grouped into three coping strategies: (1) non-productive coping; (2) reference to others; and (3) solving the problem. The response

format was on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = ‘hardly ever or never’, 2 = ‘a few times’, 3 = ‘sometimes’, 4 = ‘often’, and 5 = ‘nearly always or always’.

The implementation of the questionnaire was carried out during the academic year 2022–2023. The questionnaire was anonymous, using an electronic form that could be answered from the students’ mobile phones in the classroom. The first mining of the final data collected in the anonymized case matrix took place during July–August 2023.

3. Results

In this section, the findings are presented in line with the main objectives. In general terms, as shown in Table 1 data revealed that university students of education displayed positive IRC, ($N = 1175$; $M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.59$). In particular, they showed higher attitudinal IRC ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.77$), than behavioral IRC ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.73$), and finally, cognitive IRC ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.77$).

Table 1. IRC questionnaire dimensions and coping strategies: mean (M), standard deviation (SD), sample size (N), and Cronbach’s alpha (α).

Scale	M	SD	N	α
IRC	3.94	0.59	1175	0.80
Behavioral IRC	4.07	0.73	1175	0.76
Emotional IRC	4.18	0.77	1175	0.71
Cognitive IRC	3.57	0.77	1175	0.62
Coping strategies	2.71	0.56	1175	0.78
Non-productive	2.15	0.76	1175	0.75
Reference to others	2.67	0.84	1175	0.75
Solving the problem	3.33	0.71	1175	0.63

In addition, we analyzed the relationship between IRC and the coping strategies students use to resolve conflicts that may arise in multi-religious encounters (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correlations between IRC and coping strategies.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. General IRC	-	0.78 **	0.83 **	0.71 **	0.07 *	−0.15 **	0.03	0.28 **
2. Cognitive IRC		-	0.54 **	0.25 **	0.11 **	−0.06 *	0.06 *	0.24 **
3. Behavioral IRC			-	0.39 **	0.17 **	−0.04	0.11 **	0.32 **
4. Emotional IRC				-	−0.12 **	−0.24 **	−0.10 **	0.09 **
5. Coping strategies					-	0.70 **	0.80 **	0.67 **
6. Non-productive coping						-	0.34 **	0.18 **
7. Reference to others							-	0.34 **
8. Problem solving								-

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

The correlations between the main variables highlight the relevance of how to solve conflicts, especially when religious diversity is involved. The findings reveal that university students of education with higher IRC deal differently with problems and conflicts. In particular, those who use more avoidance strategies (non-productive coping) have less interreligious emotional and cognitive IRC competence. In contrast, university students higher in direct coping (problem solving) were higher in the three IRC competences. Regarding reference to others coping, the higher in deal conflict through relational strategies the higher in cognitive and behavioral IRC competences but the lower in emotional IRC competence to solve conflicts.

In addition, to determine the best predictors of IRC, separate multiple regression analyses were conducted using cognitive, behavioral, and emotional IRC dimensions as the criterion variables and coping strategies for solving conflict as the predictor variables. The first regression, which included all coping strategies, made an overall significant

contribution to the regression model, $F(3, 1171) = 51.47$; $p < 0.001$, which explained 12% of the variance in overall IRC. However, when the coping factors were considered separately, it was found that non-productive coping ($\beta = -0.20$) relates negatively to overall IRC, whereas problem-solving coping ($\beta = 0.32$) is positively correlated with overall IRC ($p < 0.001$). Reference to others' coping did not contribute significantly to the prediction of IRC. Next, simple regression analysis was performed to examine how the different coping strategies to solve conflict explained the IRC dimensions, the results of which are as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of multiple regression analyses for different scales predicting cognitive, behavioral, and emotional IRC ($N = 1175$).

Variable	Cognitive IRC	Behavioral IRC	Emotional IRC
	β (SE B)	β (SE B)	β (SE B)
Non-productive coping	−0.11 *** (0.03)	−0.11 *** (0.03)	−0.240 *** (0.03)
Reference to others coping	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	−0.066 * (0.03)
Problem solving	0.26 *** (0.03)	0.33 *** (0.03)	0.154 *** (0.03)
R^2	0.07	0.11	0.08
$F(1, 1173)$	28.48 ***	48.95 ***	32.23 ***

Note * $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.001$.

The findings demonstrate that overall problem-solving coping predicted the highest score in behavioral IRC. However, emotional IRC was explained by the three types of coping. In particular, non-productive and reference to others' coping related negatively with emotional IRC. In contrast, problem solving correlated positively with emotional IRC. Regarding the two other scales, the findings suggest that problem solving correlated positively with behavioral and cognitive IRC. These results indicate that managing the emotional climate that arises from conflict and interaction with others is in part explained by the three types of coping. Coping with conflicts due to involving individuals from different backgrounds, particularly those rooted in religious differences, requires a multifaceted and culturally competent approach. Developing IRC is crucial in fostering understanding and mitigating tensions, as well as promoting emotional and harmonious coexistence.

4. Discussion

In line with the CoE recommendation on the dimension of religious and non-religious convictions within intercultural education (Council of Europe 2008). This study focused on university students in the field of education, since—as formulated by the CoE—these are agents for developing intercultural and IRC. Another important observation that should be underlined is the fact that “Religion and non-religious convictions are a dimension of intercultural education, in the sense that they are important factors in affiliation and identification, in the same way as other sources of identity such as language, history and cultural heritage. In this sense, religious, humanist, philosophical and moral convictions are a cultural phenomenon, a separate aspect of culture and social activity. This approach allows a common basis for intercultural dialogue to be found, one that transcends the usual divisions between theories and doctrines” (Birzea 2008, p. 1). In this respect, the development of IRC involves the same process as intercultural competence, and ideally should become part of the cross-cutting curricula in teacher training programs in Europe (Deardorff 2015; González and Wagenaar 2003) in the framework of intercultural education.

In relation to the findings and the design of the research, it should be noted that the study was carried out with a sufficiently large sample, however, from a very specific population: mostly young university students in education enrolled in undergraduate and master's programs at different Spanish universities. This youth population has already been raised and educated in a non-confessional state and with educational laws that protect the right to a religious education from a secular legal state, yet with a significant legacy embedded in its historical background. Administering this questionnaire to another age

range and/or participants with other social demographic profiles might yield different results, and we invite other research centers to administer it in their settings.

We would like to highlight the potential that arises from the analysis of interreligious relations from an intercultural perspective (Balkin et al. 2011; Sri Eko and Putranto 2019). This epistemological integration is correct when referring to the cognitive social and emotional processes implicit in the development of intercultural relations (Kim 1989; Stephan et al. 1999; Ting-Toomey 1988; Ward 1996).

For future studies, we hypothesize a causal relation between IRC and IRD, with people belonging to religious communities needing to promote IRC as a requirement to establish contact as well as to discuss and be able to create common initiatives.

5. Conclusions

The WPID showed that there are considerable overlaps between the CoE's agenda and the concerns of religious communities: human rights, democratic citizenship, the promotion of values, peace, dialogue, education, and solidarity. IRD can also contribute to a stronger consensus within society regarding the solutions to social problems. Furthermore, the Council of Europe (2008) sees the need for a dialogue within religious communities and philosophical convictions (intrareligious and intra-convictional dialogue), not least in order to allow public authorities to communicate with authorized representatives of religions and beliefs seeking recognition under national law. An inclusive intercultural and IRD-based approach in education requires engaging individuals in a debate on both individual and collective narratives of culture and faith, as well as an identity offering them the opportunity to share knowledge and values. Such an educational process should also acknowledge how cultural identities are the voluntary expression (conscious or otherwise) of adherence to religious communities.

In this study, we have focused on conceptual understanding of IRC. Our model of IRC integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that allow the person to be aware of their own religious position and to evaluate the positions of others, thereby enabling behavioral regulation (especially communication and religious practices) according to the context. The main dimensions of IRC include: (1) the ability to learn, to understand, and to critically analyze; (2) the capacity to manage the emotions that may arise in these situations of discomfort, ambiguity, or confusion; and (3) the skills required for the regulation of behavior on the basis of all these conditioning factors. We consider that the main responsibility in the development of these competences that contribute to IRD lies with the public administration of the state, and the educational authorities in particular. These entities can establish educational programs whose curricula can develop IRC as well as world views and moral, civic, and religious values in line with the CM/Rec 12 (Council of Europe 2008), or, as formulated by Birzea (2008, p. 1): *"this kind of learnings require more than simply didactic transition and require of the more referents, that the family or the community of origin"*.

The great contribution of competences to IRD is their potential to be developed and learned through educational programs. So, the educational system has a fundamental role to play in the development of a sense of identity and adherence to a community or a societal project (Shuali et al. 2020).

Our results highlight the connection between the IRC and the skill to cope with conflict. In addition, the most relevant finding is the empirical evidence of the influence of the emotional dimension of IRC on the other dimensions. These conclusions are crucial for the development of educational programs and resources for IRD.

In the context of democratic societies, where individual freedom and self-realization are considered core values, teachers should be able to ensure that young students of all divergent religions can achieve full recognition of the role that culture and spirituality play in their lives. Competences for intercultural and IRD are crucial in today's world, where relations with people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds are part of everyday life (Shuali and Bar Cendón 2023). In sum, the development of IRC requires

learning environments where critical thinking, emotional connection, the assumption of multidimensionality, and the complexity of human relations can be treated in an emotionally secure environment, applying resources like the Stories that Move, Upscaling good practice Project.

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