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**THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP HISTORY FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOCIAL COMPETENCES**

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**Abstract**

Generally, History of the International Relations as a discipline in the higher education reflects a scientific content dominated by events that explain certain political attitudes and actions among states in different periods of time. The historical context should be properly understood from the perspective of the relationship between different states. This perspective is developed today with aspects related by diplomatic codes and standing national or geopolitical or strategic interests. Our paper starts from the premise that this discipline of the academic curricula can develop the social competences of students. In this regard we have analyzed the curriculum and we made several systematic observations at the seminar activities. Based on the results obtained we proposed several contents that help development of the social and civic competences of the students. We proposed also some practical examples of teaching. In this way, we hope that our paper contribute to increasing the importance of disciplines that presented the relationships between states in different historical time.

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**Keywords:** History; education; teaching; competences.

## 1. Introduction

The problematic of International Relationships History constitutes an essential component in the training of the students from the History Faculty and from the Juridical and Political Sciences Faculty. This topic is also studied in the Economics, Philosophy and Sociology Faculties, it being incorporated in their basic subjects. Obviously, in these faculties, there are some specialties at which International Relationships History represents the nucleus of the students' professional training, such as the specializations: International Relations and European Studies, Diplomacy, International Law (Berridge, 2010). In all the situations, International Relationships History targets the gathering of the specific

knowledge and abilities needed by the future experts in diplomacy (Lawson, 2010) in central and local administration, political consultancy, specialized journalism, political analysts, researchers, advisers etc.

The success encountered by the International Relationships History is justified also by the fact that this field ensures students an interdisciplinary training, based on building-up abilities to analyze and interpret the political realities from multiple perspectives, such as history, diplomatic, public politics, negotiation, international law and communication. Due to its extended and quite complex content, this field of research has a predominant empirical character (Waltz, 2006); it lays emphasis on *knowing and interpreting the political realities from the cause - effect perspective* and on *reading the extended sources of information* (narrative sources, literary, diplomatic, juridical, sigillography, heraldic, scientific, epigraphic, etc.). Because of this, the students encounter difficulties in processing the information gathered, in creating common projects, in writing down the results of their research activities and in analyzing them, in communicating and debating them. So, this field of scientific training should also focus on the aspects related to developing in students the abilities to relate and to communicate in the scientific environment, and also in the public one.

## **2. Hypotheses. Objectives**

The present paper starts from the premise that International Relationships History is a research field which can offer multiple means to cultivate the communication and social relationship abilities, both during seminars, and also during the professors' lectures. In this sense, we have done a quasi-experimental research on a sample of second year students from History, Philosophy and Theology Faculty at University of Galati. The research meant to implement an educational program based on methods and techniques of learning through collaboration and cooperation, during 14 weeks. The results have been obtained by the systematic observation, oral and written interviewing (evaluation and self-evaluation).

Our results have allowed the presentation of the didactical means to train and build-up the social abilities needed in this field of scientific training. The following approach directions were included in the paper:

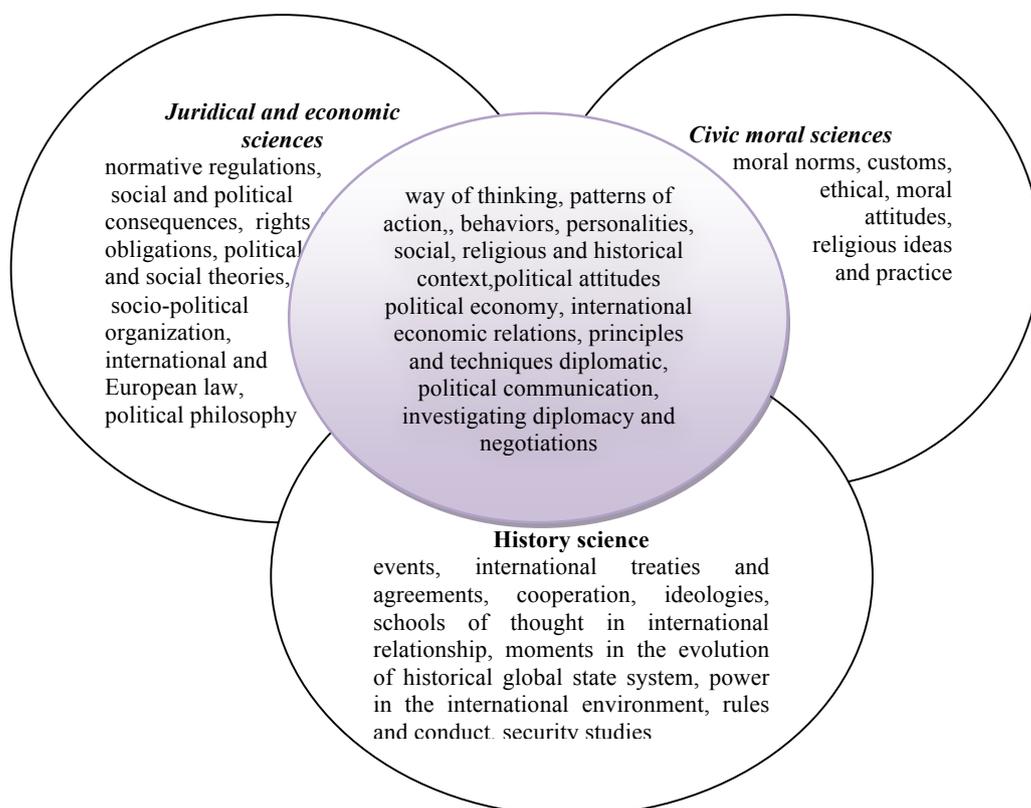
- to identify the scientific content units which may contribute more at the development of the social skills;
- to identify the didactical methods and techniques that stimulate and enhance communication and social relationship;
- to correlate those methods and techniques with the types of learning activities;
- to select and present those which have proven to have the best results among the experimental sample;
- to focus on some recommendations regarding the encouragement of teachers to give more attention to training and developing these social abilities.

## **3. Observations. Discussions**

It is generally believed that International Relationships History, that is part of history, makes up one of the scientific components about man and society, succeeding to establish the best methodological and

informational connections with the juridical sciences and moral-civics. Approaching International Relationships History from this interdisciplinary perspective constitutes an advantage in clarifying and developing its field of study, and also in training and developing some qualities needed in scientific communication and in interpersonal and social relationships.

The following diagram highlights more clearly these aspects.



**Fig. 1.** Venn Diagram: International Relationships History and the auxiliary sciences

At the same time, the elements attributed to this interdisciplinarity represent the content unites that allow a better involvement of the students, both at a personal and group level, in the research, processing and communication activities. In this way, students' learning becomes efficient from the cognitive and relation perspectives associated to the International Relationships History research field.

Our educational program was determined by the results of the interviewing of students about their learning style, scientific preferences, individual skills and individual expectations. Those aspects were linked by the specific of their academic and professional training.

The centralized data came out the following aspects:

- 26% of students prefer to work in the group projects;
- 63% of students find efficient an individual preparation of the homework given during seminars.

Among these:

- 87% state that they feel intimidated or uncertain when they have to debate their ideas in front of others;
- 13 % state that they consider it not important to debate the ideas at a collective level;

– 11 % claim that they can adapt to the professor’s demands, be it either due to their belief in the professor’s professional abilities, or to their refusal to express their opinion.

The fact that students admit the importance of an individual study during their scientific and professional training represents a very good thing. But, in order to obtain very good results in their career, it is necessary to also have interpersonal and group communicational skills and also relation abilities. Therefore, in our education program, we used the strategy to develop critical thinking, collaborative (Bocoş, 2002) and cooperation learning (Nicu, 2007).

The methods often used in our educational intervention were: *Debate, Case study, Brainstorming, Role play, Discussion Panel, working groups* (Cerghit, 2006), *I know-I will to know-I have learned, SINELG, Dials, Prediction method, Learning through discovery, Project methods* (Dumitru, 2000).

The methods and the techniques used have succeeded in stimulating the participation of students at group activities, debates, brainstorming, sharing and counter-arguing opinions, and at making them to listen other’s ideas. Percentage speaking, the results have proven an improvement in getting *the students more involved in the activities and their availability to check, strengthen or correct their specialty training.*

At the end of our educational intervention, most of students have improved their learning competences in the International Relationships History field. For example, the quality of activities was better than before level, because the students worked together, more responsible and polite. It was great to sow them working together, communicating, helping and leaning each other.

Starting from the above observations, next we suggest a concise presentation of our educational intervention, which emphasizes social competences, associated the International Relationships History field and the types of activities learning that allow the formation and development of these competences.

**Table 1.** International Relationships History - social competences and the learning activities.

<i>Social competences</i>	<i>Learning activities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to work in a group so as to reach a higher documentation and to work on the information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exercises of selecting and reading the main bibliographical resources from the field, be they printed or in an electronic format;</li> <li>• exercises of identifying the relevant and true sources.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to communicate the results of the research activity, according to the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exercises of managing a negotiation scenario at an international level (processing and management of specific information, adopting of the theoretical positions, respecting of successful negotiation conducts);</li> <li>• conflict resolution techniques, development cooperation and confidence building among international actors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to listen to other’s opinions and ideas and to build answers starting from the information received</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feigned or direct activities of communication with direct political factors involved in the negotiating activity;</li> <li>• exercises of the comparative analysis;</li> <li>• role playing and discussion;</li> <li>• simulations of international negotiations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to construct impressions and to communicate them to others as a result of the reflecting activities (which are guided by instruments specially built to accomplish them)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual and group theoretical reflections, free and guided by the tools which were specifically elaborated</li> </ul>

- the ability to collaborate with others in order to construct a discourse and in solving the working tasks
- the ability to support others in solving individual tasks, examples of involvement in obtaining the success of the diplomatic team
- the ability to support others argumentations by bringing new arguments into discussion, to add value to it or to disagree by using other arguments
- the ability to work with others in the formulation of conclusions
- the ability to promote ethical values in relation to other countries, both for self and for others
- finding solutions for some problems by applying the research and primary analytical methods;
- a constant self-evaluations so as to determine correctly the professional needs;
- exercises of the cooperation;
- examples of involvement in the successful of a delegation diplomatic team;
- exercises so as to respect the cultural differences which are part of a diplomatic negotiation;
- examples of intercultural and non-discriminatory approaches during professional interactions.
- exercises on how to argument and how to eliminate the possible objections;
- practical exercises and case studies;
- correct evaluation of problematic situations.
- analyzes of the causality and consequences of decisions and diplomatic negotiation;
- specific documents of International Relationships History designed by students;
- presentations and discussions of the case studies;
- teamwork and cooperation in the epistemic networks.
- solutions and decisions based on viable data from real situations, specific to the diplomatic and negotiating activities;
- exercises to understand the importance of the ethical behavior in diplomatic negotiation and in the development of any external political event.

#### 4. Conclusions

Usually, any discipline which is part of International Relationships History field intends, among its specific objectives, to apply the fundamental concepts in describing some events. Even if in order to fully understand them the students also need to have abilities of interpersonal relationship and of communicating in public, working in groups, we may notice that these demands are not explicitly written in the documents corresponding to those disciplines.

Still they are all part of the cognitive element. Despite all of these, we consider necessary to have these social skills clearly and detailed put down for the professors because in this way they will be encouraged to search and to apply different didactic means so as to train and develop them.

Therefore, their inclusion among the objectives specific to the disciplines tied to International Relationships History field would constitute a clear proof of their contribution in the professional training of students.

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