

Development of teachers' cross-cultural literacy in the system of further vocational education

Desarrollo de la alfabetización intercultural de los docentes en el sistema de educación vocacional adicional

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ABSTRACT

The general trends of contemporary education include the desire to integrate and universalize social relations. This study aims to explain that the process leads to the intensification of intercultural interaction between representatives of different cultural communities. The expansion of intercultural contacts in the modern world emphasizes the importance of achieving mutual understanding between people of different cultures. The study concludes that multicultural education should become an inseparable part of general education, including additional professional education, since interpersonal relationships take place in a multiethnic and multicultural environment.

Keywords: vocational education, development of teachers, multicultural, education.

RESUMEN

Las tendencias generales de la educación contemporánea incluyen el deseo de integrar y universalizar las relaciones sociales. Este estudio pretende explicar que el proceso conduce a la intensificación de la interacción intercultural entre representantes de diferentes comunidades culturales. La expansión de los contactos interculturales en el mundo moderno enfatiza la importancia de lograr el entendimiento mutuo entre personas de diferentes culturas. El estudio concluye que la educación multicultural debería convertirse en una parte inseparable de la educación general, incluida la educación profesional adicional, ya que las relaciones interpersonales tienen lugar en un entorno multiétnico y multicultural.

Palabras clave: educación vocacional, desarrollo de docentes, multicultural, educación.

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Introduction

Intercultural dialogue is unique and controversial process. Society has considerable difficulties in implementing the focused, constructive integration policy when using traditional model of world perception and building relationships on the principle of distrust of the 'other'. Development of open dialogue and cooperation between representatives of different ethnic cultures also causes difficulties. Multicultural reality is characterized by dynamic changes. The younger generation is not always ready for the processes of integration in such a reality. This is also confirmed by social policy of the state. As a result, interethnic relations are often accompanied by the increase in social tension, terrorist acts and other facts of interethnic confrontation. The organization and support of intercultural dialogue is complex and challenging process; therefore, it arouses the interest of researchers.

It should be emphasized that the growth of cultural and ethnic diversity in recent decades has increased markedly, on the one hand, due to the considerable influx of migrants to the Russian Federation from the post-Soviet countries, on the other hand, due to the information field, which is saturated with manifestations of various ethnic cultures. Growth of multiculturalism, combined with the lack of a targeted national policy aimed at ensuring successful interethnic integration, becomes an important factor in the increasing of social risks and destruction of social structures.

Cross-cultural literacy of teachers is one of the numerous challenges that arise when studying this socio-pedagogical phenomenon. To further deepen the scientific understanding of these problems, it is necessary to investigate the content of cross-cultural literacy of a teacher, the formation of his/her ability for reflection and development of similar ability among learners. The experience of educational organizations confirms that teachers are not fully aware of the students' needs to develop an understanding of not only their own, but also a different culture.

Pedagogical science is searching for ways to form and develop a teacher's cross-cultural literacy. Such a teacher should be capable to understand, comprehend, accept the values of different cultures and involve students in their own and foreign culture. These ideas are not always implemented successfully in the teaching practice. The reason lies in the fact that teacher is not always able to carry out purposeful work on introducing students to the values of other cultures, is not always aware of the complexity of this problem. In pedagogical practice, the source of these problems is the contradiction between recognition by teachers of the importance of developing tolerance among students, ability to understand various cultural values and differences, and the need to work on developing tolerance in the conditions of crisis tendencies (ethnic conflicts, intolerance, prejudice, cultural stereotypes and etc.), influencing both teachers and students in modern society.

Cross-cultural literacy is considered as a complex phenomenon, including the knowledge and understanding of different language, respect for foreign customs and traditions. Fostering and formation of the culture of interethnic relations are based on the willingness and ability of young people to communicate with people of different cultures. Skills of delicacy, flexibility in situations of cross-cultural interaction contribute to the conflict-free communication of stakeholders.

The culture of any country absorbs the best features inherent in the cultures of other nations.

Literature review

In addition to the definition of new types of literacy caused by scientific and technological advances, terminological phrases and definitions, which are associated with a person's ability to live and act in the context of culture, are of particular interest. The degree of involvement in cultural background knowledge determines cultural literacy, which is related to the ability to understand informal context, allusions and idioms that represent and create a certain culture. This type of literacy requires, in addition to acquaintance with a wide range of basic background knowledge, which constitute the core of a particular culture, also the fluency to apply this knowledge in the process of social communication. This interpretation of the concept "cross-cultural literacy" reflects specific social, cultural and national experience.

In the second half of the 1980s, the term "cultural literacy" was introduced into the scientific use by the American culturologist E.D. Hirsch, the author of "The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy" (1988) and "The 'New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy', published in several editions [1]. This topic is also relevant for Russia. Recently, there have been repeated attempts at methodological verification of cultural literacy through the compilation of test items and vocabulary. The following definitions are derived from the term "cross-cultural literacy":

- literacy in the field of national (traditional) culture, the idea of which is associated with the increase in the level of knowledge about traditions and customs, folk dances, music and poetry;

- multicultural literacy, which represents the ability to freely navigate in the multicultural world, understanding its meanings and values, as well as embodying them in worthy examples of civilized behavior when interacting with representatives of different nationalities and countries [2].

According to German philosopher H. G. Gadamer, education means that an individual, rising from his/her natural essence into the sphere of spirit, finds in the customs, language and social structure of own people a certain substance that he/she wants to master. The world into which a human grows is formed by language and customs. In this world a human finds being. The essence of education, therefore, is a return to oneself, the cause of which is alienation [4].

At about the same time, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the word “culture” also entered Russia through the French language. Following I. Kant, who noted that culture itself means the social value of a person, and H. Rickert, who understood culture as the totality of objects associated with universally valid values and cherished for these values, many Russian thinkers considered culture in line with the assertion of its unity with human values. So, S.L. Frank defined culture as a set of objective values carried out in the socio-historical life [5]. Russian philosopher N.A. Berdyaev directly characterized culture through the concept of value, saying that culture is the implementation of new values [6]. According to G.G. Shpet, considering culture as a set of values, the nature acquires any meaning, including aesthetic, like everything else, only in the context of culture [7]. Another Russian thinker L.P. Karsavin wrote that culture is not a simple sum of values and not even a system of them, but their organic unity, always assuming the existence of a certain subject who creates, stores and develops them, and who develops oneself in them, and only in them [8].

In general, the nineteenth-century thinkers were characterized by the awareness of reality as two-fold, including nature and culture, which was understood as “the world of human”, as “the kingdom of spirit”, as the combination of various forms of consciousness – moral, religious, etc. We agree with M.S. Kagan, who, analyzing cultural studies of that time, noted that culture was considered not in its value, not as a complex system, but in specific manifestations, as a result of which the philosophy of culture was divided into specific disciplines (ethics, philosophy, axiology, aesthetics, etc.) [3].

Russian scientists note a contradiction between the recognition of the importance of developing tolerance, the ability to understand cultural values and the preservation of cultural identity. It is not always that participants in the educational process can overcome cultural stereotypes and equally positively perceive both their own culture and the culture of another people.

For Russia, which is a multicultural, multiconfessional secular state, civic unity and social cohesion are of particular value and significance. This is reflected in the federal target program “Strengthening the Unity of the Russian Nation and the Ethnocultural Development of the Peoples of Russia” (2014–2020), Presidential Decree No. 761 of June 1, “On the National Action Strategy for Children in 2012-2017”, Strategies for the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025, the National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025, which emphasize the paramount importance of the formation of civic identity, patriotic education of citizens, strengthening of spiritual communion of the peoples in the Russian Federation.

Russia is a multinational state where all nations and nationalities are actively included in the country’s economy. Accordingly, the educational system is supposed to take into account the real multinationality of student groups, thereby ensuring mutual understanding and respect for cultural differences within school environment.

In Russian pedagogical science (K.D. Ushinsky, A.S. Makarenko, V.A. Sukhomlinsky and others) the formation of national identity was considered in various aspects. Psychologists L.S. Vygotsky, S.L. Rubinstein substantiated the correlation between activity and consciousness, exploring a person’s behavior, interdependence of a person’s value system and emotional and volitional development. Love for the neighbor and homeland, compassion, awareness of unity with other people are reflected in the works of M.M. Bakhtin, N.A. Berdyaev, S.K. Bondyrev, I.A. Ilyin, D.S. Likhachev, V.A. Sukhomlinsky. The works of Ya.B. Amirov, Yu.G. Volkov, O.V. Gukalenko, V.V. Kochetkov are devoted to identity issues. Yu.N. Kulyutkin, V.I. Lyubimov, E.I. Ogarev, V.G. Onushkin considered cross-cultural literacy as a type of functional literacy.

Proposed Methodology

The concepts of “cross-cultural literacy”, “intercultural education”, “multicultural education”, “intercultural and cross-cultural communication” could be viewed through various scientific and pedagogical approaches.

In modern science, the most forward-looking approach to the consideration of categorical concepts is the dialogical approach, which correlates with the ideas of multiculturalism and multi-perspective education in the framework

of the global approach. The dialogical approach is focused on the dialogue of cultures, cross-cultural interaction, equally and mutually enriching each other, the purpose of which is to preserve and respect cultural diversity based on the idea of openness.

The essence of the dialogical approach is the revision of education as intercultural, the introduction of students to the cultures of different nations. This is the education that forms planetary consciousness and allows students to communicate with representatives of various nations and easily integrate into any cultural and educational space. Such an approach in the system of further vocational education allows students to expand the boundaries of their worldview, provides an opportunity to look critically at the ideas and judgments that dominate in the society. In this case, teacher should act as a model, demonstrate open thinking, while having his/her own position. Pedagogical activity holds a special place among all types of cultural activities. It is aimed at systematization of cultural values and formation of a person's ability to "revitalize" cultural meanings [9].

Education and culture cannot be separated from each other. Being the most important part of culture, the sphere of education includes the process of inheritance, preservation, dissemination and inclusion to the values of culture, the process of familiarizing a person with culture, forming it as a subject of culture, forming one's own cultural image [10]. As S.N. Artanovsky argued, continuity is the "soul" of culture, its most important feature, and if there is no continuity in the development of culture, there is no culture itself [11]. A person learns culture in the process of education, and since culture is based on a written tradition, it gives reason to consider education and culture as synonyms.

Ethical approach in dealing with cross-cultural literacy is essential. It is focused on the identification and study of deep moral and ethical foundations of interpersonal relations. Ethical approach should help in determining the values, ideals and moral principles that underlie cross-cultural literacy. Moral responsibility contributes to the elimination of intercultural differences, forms creative environment of mutual respect, strives to preserve the diversity of cultures.

Result Analysis

Based on the analysis of the development of multicultural society in modern Russia, the key sociocultural factors have been formulated that influence the development of teachers' cross-cultural literacy:

- an increase in the rate of integration and differentiation in inter-ethnic relations, which sometimes leads to strengthening of nationalist discourse;
- significant psychological and pedagogical potential of cross-cultural literacy, capable not only to preserve the culture of own people, but also to form positive attitude to the cultures of other nations;
- common history of the formation and development of nations, which determines the attitude not only to the past, but also to the prospects of the state;
- modern Russia is characterized by a certain decrease in trust between ethnic groups, which leads to an increase in negative attitudes, xenophobia and aggressive behavior;
- a trend towards the growth of youth organizations united by nationalist views.

The identified sociocultural conditions and factors of multicultural society cannot claim to be complete, but they are significant for the formation and development of cross-cultural literacy as the basis of Russian identity in the modern multicultural educational space.

Formation and development of students' cross-cultural literacy is the task of teachers. The concept of "cross-cultural literacy of a teacher" is revealed in Table 1.

Table 1. Cross-cultural literacy of a teacher

Cross-cultural literacy of a teacher	Personal and psychological qualities (openness, tolerance, positive attitude, motivation for interpersonal contacts with representatives of other cultures, respect for other cultures, stress tolerance, conflict tolerance, etc.)
	Cognitive qualities (language knowledge, cultural and behavioral knowledge; knowledge of the norms, values and background of cultural differences in both native and other cultures).
	Ethno-social qualities (sociability, ethno-ethics (recognition and respect of traditions and customs of a different culture), ability to constructively solve ethno-social problems, knowledge of ethno-verbal and ethno-nonverbal culture).
	Creative and pedagogical qualities (creative thinking, creative potential, justified readiness for adequate action), etc.

The cognitive qualities of teacher include language knowledge, i.e. knowledge of lexical, grammatical, phonetic and other norms of the language; cultural and behavioral components. The cultural-geographic component is the geographic knowledge (geography, history, literature, etc.) of another country and understanding of the facts that influence the worldview of carriers of a different culture, knowledge of everyday realities, knowledge and understanding of social rituals, knowledge of values, moral guidelines relevant to this culture. Cultural and behavioral components are characterized by knowledge of speech etiquette; cultural behavioral norms, the ability to respond with restraint and adequately to verbal, non-verbal and ethically cultural context.

Personal and psychological qualities of a teacher include openness, tolerance, positive attitude, internal motivation for interpersonal contact with people from other cultures, respect for other cultures, friendly communication, stress tolerance, conflict tolerance, etc.

The teacher's creative pedagogical qualities are viewed as "the ability to abandon stereotypical ways of thinking" (P. Guilford), the ability to find effective, optimal ways to solve the tasks set, to engage in creative activities, the ability to concentrate in order to generate new ideas, showing justified readiness for adequate risk, creative potential, etc.

Education aims to ensure the entry of a person into culture through the development of cultural values, carried out as the transmission of culture from generation to generation and the consolidation of historically established cultural values in each generation. In addition, education, like culture, cannot be limited to the values of one nation, but should address the enrichment of individual and social mentality of a given society with universal human values, reflecting the objective integrity of human civilization and natural tendencies to spiritual convergence and gradual integration of various societies, an increasingly active dialogue of cultures. Accordingly, the content of education includes three interrelated blocks: a block that provides an opportunity for a person to identify himself or herself as belonging to a particular culture; a block that creates conditions for an individual to enter into equal dialogue with the existing foreign cultural environment, and a block that provides an opportunity for an individual to engage in modern global civilizational processes, to understand them [12]. The system of education is exactly the field that can recreate the diversity of cultures, as well as contribute to the development the students' culture-forming ability of reflection (that is, assessing oneself, people and the world from the perspective of a cultural subject), which acts as a necessary prerequisite for the development of understanding the value of their own and other cultures. Currently, in addition to the need to comprehend the essence of the native culture, the formation of cross-cultural literacy, which consists in the development of students' ability to understand different cultures, is becoming ever more relevant.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural literacy is a prerequisite for communication in a multicultural society. Cross-cultural communication is based on individual elements, and cultural aspects affect all levels of communication: verbal, non-verbal, etiquette. The main function of communication in society is socialization, the purpose of which is the appropriation of cultural experience.

Pedagogical support involves the creation of organizational and substantive conditions that allow participants in the educational process to improve the skills of intercultural dialogue in a multicultural society.

Intercultural communication is important for creating the conditions for social and civic self-realization in the process of multicultural education by attracting young people to participate in the activities of civil society institutions and socio-political actions.

In a multicultural society, processes of ethnic identification should be stimulated, which requires special attention to the formation of cross-cultural literacy.

In modern information society, the dynamic growth of needs in the period of large-scale socio-economic shifts and entry into the post-industrial era, further vocational education provides an opportunity to meet the demands of society and the state.

Social practice and pedagogical experience confirm the need to develop cross-cultural literacy as one of the most important resources for overcoming social risks, associated with increased nationalist sentiment and national-cultural security.

Multicultural education as a whole is aimed at creating pedagogical conditions for positive cultural identification and self-identification of students, which allows to enter the multicultural space of the world and the country, perceive other cultural values positively and conduct a constructive dialogue with their representatives.

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