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**INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AS RESOURCE FOR
IMPROVEMENT OF MULTICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION
IN RUSSIA**

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to identify issues that would enhance the experts' discourse in the adaptation and educational potential of the international experience in the area of multicultural education and the formation of a tolerant identity of future teachers which can serve as a reference point and a resource for innovations in improvement the domestic system of multicultural education of students in the pedagogical higher education institutions of Russia.

The methodology covers the desk research including the analysis of the available reliable Russian and international sources of information on a problem, comparative and analytical method, system method, dialectic method, elements of social design, as well as a method of rationalization of meanings.

The authors made an attempt to show a value of the international activity of the Russian pedagogical educational institutions in the field of implementation of joint projects on multicultural education of future teachers and detection of the importance of a tolerant personality formation in the conditions of the international educational integration that can form a knowledge basis for the subsequent scientific researches in this field.

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Keywords: International educational experience; multicultural educational platform; future teachers; international projects; programs, multicultural tolerance; cross-cultural competences.



1. Introduction

This article explores some of the key themes concerning the role and status of the international experience on multicultural education and tolerance formation that may serve as a reference point and a resource for innovations in the improvement of the Russian system of multicultural teacher education.

The article begins with a discussion of the possibilities and the necessity for multicultural education in Russia in the context of the internationalization, integration and globalization of education. This will be followed by a brief outline of some ideas from the international experience in the field of modernization of the content and technologies of teacher education. The article will progress with a detailed examination of the role of international projects on multicultural education and tolerance formation, in particular about the project ALLMEET (*Actions of Lifelong Learning Addressing Multicultural Education and Tolerance in Russia*) within the Tempus-IV program, 6th round. The articles will then argue that as a result of the international experience studying, the phenomenon “tolerance” has been viewed not in a narrow sense as the compelled tolerance to others (other than the majority), and not as indifference, indifference to the specific problems arising in a certain social group, but as *a social norm defining resistance of an individual to conflicts in multicultural society*. The article will be concluded with a detailed overview of the results of the experimental research on the formation of cross-cultural competence of future bachelors that was conducted at the Kazan Federal University, Academy of Social education (Kazan) and Mari State University (Yoshkar-Ola).

2. Problem Statement

The leading role in the training of globally educated specialists belongs to higher education. It has to provide citizens with the relevant education meeting the requirement of the global economy in the XXI century and their civil society.

Modern professional educational institutions are to develop competences, enrich with knowledge, instill values, and to create the relations which will allow university graduates to be successful and competitive in a quickly changing, more and more globalized multicultural world (Kolobova, 2006; Mukhametzyanova, & Tregubova, 2016). Adoption of the Bologna Declaration and the Russian "entry" into the European educational space have brought new challenges and put forward new tasks before those working in teacher education and preparing new student teachers for the international standards. Not only competence-based approach lies at the basis of a new pedagogical paradigm, but also fundamentally different requirements to the identity of a teacher where the possession of universal values and world culture becomes the main distinctive features.

3. Research Questions

As the important part in people's interaction is assigned to their cross-cultural cooperation, the success of future teachers in Russia in terms of their professional and career development will depend directly on their ability to interact within other cultures. The sharp rise in student mobility throughout the world today is one of the main reasons why there has been an increased interest and discussion on Multicultural Education and tolerance formation. Considering the development of students' and staff's

academic mobility in Russia, and also a claim of the Russian higher education institutions to occupy a certain "niche" in the international market of educational services within other cultures and national traditions, an important task of formation of a tolerant personality in the system of multicultural education on the basis of the best European practices has been set.

Moreover, today national isolation of higher education institutions contradicts the processes of internationalization, integration, and globalization, and this conflict manifests itself in various problems, including non-recognition of the Russian university diplomas and specializations; lack of international audits and quality assessments; braking the questions of the international accreditation. For overcoming of this conflict it is necessary to research the main forms and characteristics of reforming the higher pedagogical education abroad, and also to reveal that adaptation-educational potential of international experience that can serve as a resource and reference point for innovations in reforming the Russian system of teachers' education.

Our research of the international experience in teacher education shows that there are certain ideas which can be used and implemented in the Russian system while at the same time taking into account the mentality, values, traditions and customs of the Russian people. In particular, in the process of modernization of the content of education, a special interest is paid to some tendencies, such as the strengthening of interrelations between general education and professional components; international context of the maintenance of educational materials; transferring the focus of the training results from qualification to key competences' formation, etc. So, in some countries the contents of education are guided by the personal development of a child (USA, Italy), in others — by public requirements (Netherland, Denmark), in the third ones — by the logic of the scientific knowledge (Germany) (Wang, 2008).

4. Purpose of the Study

Globalization, mass migration, impact of adverse factors on students, aggravation of the international and interreligious relations have raised sharply a question of new cultivations mechanisms' development which should work in the context of a multicultural environment. The formation of these characteristics of a personality is impossible without the acquisition of skills of cross-cultural interaction that is the cornerstone of such phenomenon of the XXIst century as *tolerance*.

In our opinion, tolerance formation, as opposed to manifestations of nationalism and xenophobia, can be regarded as mechanisms for achievement of an international consensus. That was the aim of the international project within the Tempus-IV program, the 6th round, ALLMEET – *Actions of Lifelong Learning Addressing Multicultural Education and Tolerance in Russia*" (www.allmeet.org). The project set essentially actual and, at the same time, an ambitious task, the solving of which would give the unique chance to inform people of different age in various regions of Russia and Europe about the understanding the value of cultural variety, languages and a way of life of other people, and once again to tell them that strengthening of friendship and a resolution of conflicts on the basis of "a multicultural educational platform" is a basis of a safe future for the whole world [2]. The realization of those ALLMEET tasks was enabled by Institute of pedagogics, psychology and social problems (Kazan) together with the famous European universities: Bologna University, University of Glasgow and New Lisbon university, and also

by the European Center of recognition of qualifications – VPL (Netherlands) in 2014-2017. Some federal Russian universities, such as the Naberezhnye Chelny Institute of the Kazan federal university, Siberian federal university, the Mari state university as well as some others participated in the implementation of the project.

5. Findings

The comparative analysis of the European and Russian experience of *students' multicultural education and tolerance formation* showed that there were considerable different interpretations in definitions, the logical device, the methodological bases and sequence of actions for development of mechanisms of tolerance formation, in technology of creation of diversification programs and educational "products". On the one hand, there was an enormous dispersion of theories of its organization ("*paradigm pluralism*") for these processes, on another, there was total absence of the fundamental theories, and only "small concepts" existed. The various interpretations of the essence of these processes are presented in the "ALLMEET" glossary that was developed at the beginning of the project in 2014.

The project participants are convinced that higher education carries out a key role in the development of cross-cultural competence as students, teachers, and administration of higher education institutions have to realize the crucial role as intermediaries in the multicultural society, and it was the main reason for implementation of the ALLMEET Project. The challenge of modern society consists in training the young people for skills which will be necessary for their "correct address" with interethnic cultural diversity, for the creation of complete structure of the Russian citizens' identity, considering the cultural distinctions between people, and at the same time – emphasizing their similarity.

It is known that tolerance makes the "core" of cross-cultural communication, it creates opportunities for achieving peace and harmony in multiethnic societies (Mukhametzyanova et al., 2017; Gundara, 2011; Wang, 2008). As for *tolerance* as a phenomenon, and as a result of research of international experience, the authors began to understand *tolerance* not in a narrow sense as compelling others to be tolerant to those who do not belong to the majority (for example, to disabled people or ethnic minorities) and not as indifference, indifference to the specific problems, arising in a certain social group. Studying of the content and the essence of a phenomenon *tolerance* allows to claim it as *the social norm defining resistance of an individual to the conflicts in multicultural society* (Action plan, 2007; Mukhametzyanova et al. 2017; Wang, 2008)

As the important part is assigned to cross-cultural cooperation, the success in bachelors' professional formation and career development will depend directly on their ability to interact in the conditions of other cultures. Bologna process provided more opportunities at university level for Intercultural Education for the student body. Considering the development of academic mobility and also Russian ambitions to come to the dominating positions at the international labor market within other national traditions, we set the important and ambitious task of formation of the tolerant personality with cross-cultural competences.

The experimental work on the formation of cross-cultural competence of bachelor students (future teachers) within the ALLMEET project was conducted in the Republic of Tatarstan and Republic of Mari El on the basis of Kazan federal University, Academy of Social Education (Kazan) and Institute of

pedagogics and psychology of Mari State University *during* the period of 2015-2017. The total number of students from two regions made more than 300 people.

The first stage took place in 2014-2015 and consisted of studying the literature on the problem and defining the methodological tool for our experiment.

As a result of interdisciplinary approach we came to a conclusion that "tolerance" is the cornerstone of a phenomenon *cross-cultural competence* that is a complex of knowledge and ideas of culture of other people, and also abilities for communication with representatives of other cultures, ability for assessment the behavior in various situations of cross-cultural communication.

Formation of the bachelors' tolerant identity is no other than her/his successful inclusion in the civic society and readiness for performance of social roles in the system of multicultural education.

Also, at this stage, the staging experiment, directed on the formation of a tolerant identity among bachelor students was conducted on the basis of the technique of studying an international consent developed in MarSU by V. M. Vasilyev. The results of this experiment were reflected in the intermediate reports of the ALLMEET participants' meeting at the Universities of Glasgow and Lisbon and allowed to draw a conclusion that the people of Tatarstan and Mari El were choosing peace and harmony as an indicator of that fertile environment on which there was a formation of tolerance among bachelor students in the system of multicultural education.

At the second stage – 2015-2016 – the experimental approbation of social and pedagogical conditions for cross-cultural competences formation was carried out. On the basis of the structural definition of this process, several disciplines within which there was a formation of the basic competences, promoting tolerance formation as social norm and defining resistance to the conflicts, were revealed, and among them "Ethnopedagogics and Ethnopsychology", "Ethics of international communication", "Diagnostics of cross-cultural communication", etc. Each of these disciplines carried a huge internal potential for influencing the identity formation process of bachelor students who were engaged in multicultural education that was organized through diverse types of social practice (field work), including outside of the republics and wider Russia.

The third stage – 2016-2017 – consisted of making a choice of optimum social and pedagogical techniques which would allow students of upper courses on the basis of their earlier gained knowledge and skills to find effective ways of interaction with representatives of different cultures within the system of multicultural education. Our experimental work showed that project methods and project technologies turned out to be very effective.

6. Conclusion

This article has discussed a number of issues related to Multicultural Education, including a focus on the conditions for tolerance formation and the increased interest in multicultural education generated by the rise in international student mobility and academic staff mobility. The successful formation of students' tolerance in the multicultural environment is their inclusion in a zone of the positive interethnic interaction which is based on the principles of humanity, goodwill, mutual understanding, cooperation and friendship; as well as the constructive interaction of social institutions in the organization of the

effective multicultural environment and development of the healthy, multi-subject personality with tolerant installation.

In connection with the significant increase in the numbers of international students in the Russian higher education institutions (both in Tatarstan, and in the Republic of Mari El) the implementation of the pilot project on creating the International youth government proved to be very effective. Thus the students who arrived to Russia, in general, from the former soviet republics and from African countries together with leaders of students' university councils of student's self-government, try to develop the ways for positive assimilation in Russia with preservation of their culture and originality, but on the compulsory condition of studying the history of Russia and its traditions.

The formation processes of the tolerant identity of bachelor students in two regions – the Republic of Tatarstan and Republic of Mari El – despite some regional peculiarities were very similar. This first of all is defined by a multi nationality of the population structure, by a character of migratory streams, and also by the healthy "temperature" of the interethnic and interfaith relations in the two regions.

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