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**PREPARING TEACHERS TO WORK IN MULTICULTURAL
CLASSROOMS (IN THE USA AND TATARSTAN)**

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Abstract

The topic of our study is relevant due to the current events in different countries concerning the issues of immigrant policy (the civil war in Syria, the situation with refugees from Africa in Europe, relations between the local population and immigrants, etc.). In our study, we analyze the experience of the USA and the Republic of Tatarstan in multicultural education. Traditional approach to teaching other nations' culture presupposes a study of the history of the country, standards of conduct, sociolinguistics, and other related fields of knowledge. The study allows us to assert that a critical approach to intercultural communication gives an opportunity to look at the world events from another perspective. It helps to develop respect and tolerance towards the representatives of other cultures. The concept of culture, the sense of belonging to a particular nation and self-reliance, the awareness of the language importance and communication in the language, the acquisition of knowledge, the desire to change the repressive environment through dialogue and training are important components of this approach in pedagogy. The article's materials could be useful for teachers working with multicultural students and interested in ways of increasing motivation of their students.

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1. Introduction

The first decades of the 21st century proved the need to develop a new educational philosophy designed to balance the role of teachers, students and schools in the process of socio-cultural reconstruction. The discussion on creation of a 'post-modern multicultural' society includes the term *multicultural education*.

The idea of multicultural education is also important because students should not perceive the culture of the language they are studying from the perspective of their own culture. The modern approach to teaching a foreign language involves three types of culture: native culture; the perception of native culture by foreigners; and finally, the culture of the target-language country. Insight into the culture of the country through the learned language has its advantages – studying the peculiarities of language acquisition contributes to a better understanding of the studied language. Education should thus lead to mutual understanding among peoples of different countries and cultures. The importance of the simultaneous learning of language and culture of people has a practical application to real-life communication. Educational system aimed at achieving cultural goals predetermines understanding of both the national and foreign schools experience and expertise, as well as the analysis of topical issues in education in the context of the future culture formation. Changes in the system of education have a significant impact on the prospects of socio-cultural development and play a leading role in the development of scientific and pedagogic ideas of foreign and Russian researchers.

2. Problem Statement

This research is based on the analysis of the implemented concept of multicultural education in the USA. The traditional approach to teaching the culture of other nations includes teaching the history of the country, accepted standards of citizens' behavior, sociolinguistics, and other related fields of knowledge. A tolerant attitude to the culture of the peoples of the world can be promoted through studying abroad.

The current state of affairs in the country imposes new requirements on teachers' training. The transition to the information society is explained by globalization. Reflection on this trend requires the reformation of the school system in the United States, the development of new educational standards and forces the government to pay attention to the system of teacher education in general.

The demographic situation in the country has had a huge impact on teacher education. The problem of multiculturalism becomes one of the central problems in a modern society. The U.S. Department of Education was forced to revise the law on primary and secondary education highlighting new ways of its development:

- enhancing access to education for migrant children, children with special needs, national minorities and rural population;
- improving school curricula for ESL students.

All this served as the basis for revision and improvement of teachers' training programs (Khanipova, 2017).

The third factor influencing multicultural policy is a variety of university associations involved in the development of professional standards of training in higher educational institutions of the country. Their work is also related to the content of education programs, pupils' development, and consideration of the

pupils' individual characteristics. These communities take an active part in the study and development of qualifications and competencies for teachers.

Socialization is the main goal of multicultural education in many multi-ethnic countries. A tolerant attitude to culture is typical to teachers who have knowledge, skills, and attitudes, necessary for the promotion of personal development of students of different cultural backgrounds, that is, students who have different life experience, culture, and language. The ability of teachers and students to peacefully resolve intrapersonal, interpersonal, interethnic conflicts is the main condition for organizing multicultural education. In this regard, one of the fundamental tasks of multicultural pedagogy is to train highly qualified specialists possessing professional qualities and personal characteristics that help them resolve conflicts in the classroom.

The idea of multicultural education was developed in the USA in 1950-1960. The main purpose of multicultural education was to reform national schools and promote the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students. Oliver Brown's decision changed the law of 'Separate but equal education', which led to an increase in aspirations for equal opportunities and social justice, especially in public education (Balitskaya, 2008).

Taking into account the fact that the main goal of multicultural education is the promotion of intellectual, social, and personal growth of all students, we can conclude that this goal coincides with traditional academic goals. High academic standards and achievements are implemented through the application of appropriate innovative approaches. However, it also depends on the teacher's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior patterns, as he/she provides equal opportunities to every student during the learning process and helps them develop multicultural competences (i.e., helps them understand different mentalities, systems of perception, assessment, etc.).

3. Research Questions

This research project revolved around the following question: What are the main trends in the development of best practices in the implementation of multicultural education programs in the United States?

4. Purpose of the Study

The topic of our research is relevant due to the events taking place in different countries and affecting the national identity of citizens (the civil war in Syria, the situation with refugees from Africa in Europe, the interaction between the host population and immigrants, etc.).

The aim of the study is to identify the main trends in the development of best practices in the implementation of multicultural education programs in the United States.

The analysis of works on multicultural education written by Russian researchers such as Bessarabova and Semisotnova (2016), Makaev, Malkova and Suprunova (1999), Valeeva and Valeev (2017), as well as the works of a number of foreign researchers, for instance, Cummins and Griffin (2012), Fassett and Warren (2006), Sobre (2017), dedicated to the identification of trends in the development of multicultural education in the United States, was of particular importance for our research.

Basic theoretical principals of our study were established with the help of the analysis of the aforementioned researchers' works which are devoted to the development of critical approach to multicultural education in the USA.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Research methods

In order to provide well-grounded conclusions on the problem of teacher education in the USA, the following theoretical and practical methods were applied:

- a descriptive method for observation and classification of the investigated problem;
- analysis of literature as well as government and non-government official papers, codes, plans, and reports on the problem.

6. Findings

The problem of multicultural education is that traditional approaches do not take into account the peculiarities of a language as a reflection of the cultural values system and peculiarities of speech as a manifestation of culturally conditioned behavior. The cultural mentality of the society represents a complex phenomenon that determines the values system of the society. National cultures are formed in such different natural and social conditions that their direct comparison leads to distortion of authentic ideas and creation of stereotypes. Thus, comparative research of cultures is possible through the mechanism of cultural universals and consideration of the characteristics of every culture in the a particular context. At the same time, every culture is reflected in the language, so that language serves as a *marker of the cultural mentality of the society*.

Cummins and Griffin (2012) argue that the application of the Critical Pedagogy methods is intended to overcome the oppressive nature of the relationship between learners and the learning process, taking into account the interests of the students. Thus, Fassett and Warren (2006) developed the theory of Critical Pedagogy based on the communicative approach and put it into practice (Akmaeva, 2008). The concept of culture, a sense of belonging to a certain nation and self-confidence, awareness of the importance of language, its usage as a means of communication and knowledge acquisition, commitment to altering the repressive system of the surrounding environment through dialogue and learning are important components of this approach in pedagogy. The critical approach in multicultural learning is a combination of several technologies, namely the traditional approach and multi-ethnic pedagogy.

The concept of '*cosmopolitan pedagogy*' proposed by Sobré-Denton, Carlsen, & Gruel (2014), combines cosmopolitanism and education, aimed at training a citizen of the world. This method of critical pedagogy is based on a cyclic model of learning and is defined by three concepts: desire, memory, and dialogue. Desire is an onward progress presupposing that a person looks at the world through the prism of spiritual values accumulated and preserved by his people for centuries (Sobre, 2017).

The role of the teacher and student in critical pedagogy is not well defined. All students attending the class (students and teachers) can teach and learn at the same time.

There are some examples of the implementation of this approach in teaching language and culture in the United States:

1. The *Hi-Chicago* program, developed on the basis of the public educational institutions' programs, the International Bachelor Program, and with the participation of civil society movement *Buildon.org*, is aimed at teaching ethnic minorities the language and culture and accommodating them at hostels. Having studied the foundations of intercultural communication, students were asked to teach students from other groups or neighbors at the hostel delivering the material through the prism of their culture values. Students noted the importance of this process while learning the culture of the country through direct interaction with the representatives of the nation, revealing the creative potential of every student. Teachers noticed the increase in the sense of self-consciousness and the overall change in the attitude to representatives of other cultures.

2. *Space2cre8* and *Hi-U.S.A.* are social networks designed to teach teenagers English as a foreign language. The language of the website is English. Students of 7-11 grades can communicate, share media files, have discussions on various topics, and operate blogs on these websites.

Works by Ladson-Billings, Professor at the University of Wisconsin, are dedicated to the study of this problem at school. G. Ladson-Billings had been conducting her research on migrant children from Africa in one of the Californian school for three years (Kramsch, 2014).

First of all, she identified successful teachers at school after she had conducted interviews with parents and school management. Their demands differed significantly from each other. The criteria which the parents used for assessing the teachers were the following:

1. Children's passion for learning.
2. Respect for parents.
3. Parents' confidence that the teacher is aware of the importance of children's ability to study in

both migrant and local communities.

The following indicators were important for the school principal:

1. Individuality and uniqueness of the teacher.
2. High attendance.
3. High performance of students in the classroom.

Eight out of the nine teachers who met all the criteria agreed to participate in the study. The study conducted by Ladson-Billings was focused on ethnographic interviewing of every teacher, video-recording of the classroom activities, collective discussions, observation of all teachers involved in the process. The last year of the experiment was devoted to the study of the validity of teaching methods. As a result, Ladson-Billings identified common characteristics of teachers participated in the research. Firstly, they were all proud of their profession, despite the fact that received low salary. While setting a goal, they were focused on the success of students. Secondly, all teachers were aware that there was discrimination in the society. They also understood how discrimination could academic performance of migrant children. Thirdly, the goal of teachers was to not make children equal in the society but to teach them to adapt to society. Fourth, every teacher created a special atmosphere in the classroom that promoted learning. They applied the principle of Cooperative Pedagogy.

Similar experiment was conducted by teachers working in Russian schools in the Republic of Tatarstan, as there are a lot of migrants in this region. The main goal of the experiment was to teach migrant children to adapt to the school community, meet the requirements of the school system, as well as to avoid possible cultural shock. All this requires teachers to be tolerant of existing difficulties in the regulation and

management of the multicultural classroom.

Although Russia has not yet have the system of teacher education with a clear focus on preparing teachers to work in multicultural classrooms, the main trends in the development of education contribute to the promotion of tolerance, training linguistic competence, readiness to participate in ‘dialogue of cultures’ among future teachers. For this reason, innovations in teacher education are an important component of education for sustainable future. The increased interest of the pedagogical community in cultural problems is caused by reconsideration of the accumulated cultural experience, changes of socio-economic targets, the need to set new cultural goals and objectives in the field of education due to rapid social changes. The aims of multicultural education are to develop holistic knowledge about the culture of different peoples, conceptualize the idea of cultural diversity, promote a tolerant attitude to cultural differences, create conditions for the integration of students into different cultures, promote respect for the history and culture of other peoples, create a multicultural environment as a basis for interaction with representatives of other cultures, etc. (Safonova, 1996).

The idea of learning a foreign language and the culture of the studied language, its history, socio-cultural traditions, peculiarities of the national mindset and world perception simultaneously has long been recognized in the methodology of foreign languages. Culture is often described as ‘the holistic way of life of a certain people’, represented as something common that unites different people, and something distinctive that predetermines differences between people alike. When applied to the study of foreign languages, culture is present ‘when we start using a foreign language’. Culture is often perceived as something inherent to people. ‘Culture is present when you realize that you cannot speak a foreign language’ (Yelizarova, 2005). Thus, the problems of intercultural communication become the object of research in many different fields: Philosophy, Sociology, Linguistics, Communication Theory, Sociolinguistics, Social and General Psychology, Public Relations, etc. The problem of intercultural communication and, first of all, its basic component, such as inter-ethnic communication, gains particular importance from the perspective of general pedagogy. It is clear that the emphasis is laid on the development of the ability to perceive the content and individual elements of the foreign culture through the prism of the native culture (Lebedeva, 1999).

Special attention should be paid to the role of educator in intercultural communication, i.e the teacher of a foreign language, whose aim is to manage the process of cultures interaction and their dialogue. It is the teacher who is responsible for preserving the ethno-cultural traditions of society. The understanding of global civilization is achieved through the insight into and acquiring knowledge about the country of the studied language.

According to some scholars, the communication between representatives of different cultures is effective only in case when significant time and effort are given to the process of learning a foreign language and its culture. The information about culture, nature, history, and geography of native lands can expand the understanding of a foreign language. Such assessment of the ethno-cultural component allows us to conclude that the information about the native culture is important for everyone. The emotional component should be used in teaching in order to improve the effectiveness of foreign language teaching (Lebedeva, 1999.). In this regard, teachers play a leading role in this process. There are more than 60 million teachers in the world and each of them is capable of changing the system of moral and social values. According to the former Minister of Education and Science of Great Britain K. Clarke, ‘It is vital that the teacher, being

competent, from the very beginning, does his work effectively, because the children he teaches will not have another chance’.

In the Republic of Tatarstan, which is located the Russian Federation, language policy is focused on improving the quality of foreign language teaching at all stages; serving the needs of society in learning foreign languages; improving the pupils’ educational competence according to modern requirements and the international standards accepted by the Council of Europe; developing language pluralism; preserving and establishing education institutions; developing new methods of foreign language teaching; modifying the content of foreign language teaching; developing new teaching techniques; integration and complexity; introduction interdisciplinary and integrative culture studies courses; openness of certification procedures.

Teaching foreign languages within the system of general education is practiced in more than 2200 schools of the Republic of Tatarstan. The number of pupils studying in these schools is over 350 thousand. In order to solve the problem of updating the content of foreign language teaching programs and improve the quality of education at schools and higher educational establishments in the Republic of Tatarstan, the following solutions were proposed: integration of foreign language teaching programs in other subjects; creation of manuals on the implementation of the ethno-cultural component in the content of language education in the Republic of Tatarstan; introduction of special foreign language courses on regional studies; ensuring continuous monitoring of the level of language proficiency in high schools; development of the language programs for gifted pupils.

The problem of updating the content of foreign language teaching programs and organizational forms of the educational process is connected to the level of professionalism of teachers and their competences. It crucial to increase the quality, availability, and efficiency of school language courses. Finally, it will help address strategic challenges of educational innovations and modernization.

Introduction of the regional component to the foreign language teaching syllabus in the Republic of Tatarstan was necessary due to insufficient ability of secondary school pupils to represent the national (Tatar and Russian) culture at the international level. This fact predetermined the main objectives of the introduction of regional component into the syllabus as a part of foreign language teaching program. In addition to the above-mentioned objectives we consider important to promote readiness of students for intercultural communication, dialogue of cultures, i.e. the ability to analyze and compare political, economic, and cultural aspects of different countries; to apply knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-life situations; to promote love for the country pride for country’s achievements. As a result, it is expected that high school pupils will learn how to present their native culture in a foreign environment, explain the facts about their native culture to foreign people, and form the picture of the world.

The aims of multicultural education are: to gain an insight into other peoples’ cultures and traditions; develop an idea about cultural diversity; promote a tolerant attitude towards cultural differences; create conditions for the integration of students into a multicultural world; teach pupils to respect the history of their country and traditions of other people; create a multicultural environment which serves as a basis for the interaction of pupils with representatives of other cultures.

The UN ‘Declaration of Principles on Tolerance’ states that tolerance is unity in diversity. Tolerance makes possible to achieve peace and stability. It helps to move from the culture of war to the culture of peace.

The content of professional pedagogical education in the United States is largely diversified under

the influence of cultural and historical traditions. The key topic of pedagogical discussions in the modern world is the *idea of multiculturalism*, which is supported by the state.

Educational programs in American universities reflect the interests of particular ethnic groups. The study on multicultural issues helped to reveal that education programs are constantly changing and supplementing with courses that give teachers knowledge and understanding of students' diversity. For instance, 'Training of Children at Risk'; 'Creative Education for Gifted Children'; 'Multicultural Approach to Education', 'Languages of Indigenous Peoples', etc. Modern teacher education programs in the United States can expand knowledge of future teachers about representatives of different cultures, and contribute to the formation of readiness for productive international and intercultural cooperation in the country's multicultural context (Mukhametshina, Solovyova, & Pomortseva 2017).

Similar courses are implemented in the Russian universities. They include: 'Multicultural Education', 'Inclusive Education: Approaches and Technologies', 'Preparing Teachers to Work in a Multicultural Classroom', etc.

Special attention is given to the issues of school adaptation, integration, and education of children of different ethnic groups, namely, national minorities and immigrants, at mainstream schools. Preparing teachers to work in a multicultural should be a priority of the *program of professional development*, as one of the main goals of education is the transmission of culture.

Having analyzed the organization of language education in different countries, we can conclude that there are many similarities in the content of education programs in the USA and Russia. For instance, both countries have witnessed significant changes in the field of language education over the last 30-40 years. Expansion of the scope of language education programs in the world has led to the introduction of new technologies in the process of foreign language teaching.

Thus, one of the goals in the process of teaching foreign languages is the development of students' ability to exchange views, interact in a cross-cultural environment of the classroom. It is advisable to teach students to compare their native culture with other cultures. At the same time, some teachers propose to include specific information about the culture of the peoples of the world (highlighting the significance of the motivational potential for students) in the cultural component of foreign language teaching.

7. Conclusion

Thus, having analyzed the American and Russian experience in providing multicultural education in the classroom, it is possible to identify a number of principles of successful learning taking into account cultural differences:

- *The principle of anticipating a successful result.* Pupils should understand and anticipate positive outcomes. In turn, the teacher motivates pupils to learn, focusing on the important role of education in a multicultural world.
- *The principle of improving the developed cultural competence.* If the education process is well-organized, students will develop a number of competences based on the acquired knowledge in the field of multicultural interaction.

Many migrant pupils associate a school with a place where they cannot express their views and opinions, as many American schools are characterized by cultural diversity. We believe that the teacher should be

able to consider the features of the pupil's native culture as a means of learning. Thus, the curriculum should be developed in accordance with the available knowledge and cultural experience of students.

- *Critical thinking principle.* Students should develop a critical thinking ability, which will help them better understand other peoples' cultures.

The experience of multicultural education in the USA is undeniably valuable. It can be applied to a Russian context as well. In this regard, further research would be aimed at exploring methodological and conceptual issues that have not yet been widely addressed in works of Russian scholars.

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