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**DEVELOPING TOLERANCE IN STUDENTS STUDYING AT A  
MULTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY**

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***Abstract***

Tolerance as an integrative personality characteristic enables people to counter extremism and to increase security, stability and sustainability in society. One of the important goals of higher education is to instill in youth tolerant attitude towards different worldviews and cultural traditions. In view of this, the main objective of the present study is to develop an effective methodology aimed at fostering university students' tolerance towards one another in the context of multicultural educational space. In the course of this study the following methods have been used: the project-based method, dilemma method and brainstorming. Moreover, the method of collaborative creative work was used – the method that requires students to work by helping one another in the academic setting. Our findings indicate that tolerance can be effectively developed through organizing special learning sessions and events with a range of orientations (cultural, creative, patriotic, heuristic, research and other orientations). In the course of our study we came to conclusion that the most effective way to develop tolerance in students is through encouraging them to think critically and independently. When students are learning to be tolerant they come to see that all people differ in their interests, views, appearances but they all have the right to express their individuality. We also established that certain methods are very effective in promoting tolerance.

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**Keywords:** Student, multicultural education, tolerance, method, dialogue, academic group.



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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The importance of the issue**

The issue of instilling tolerance in youth is one of the most important in the world today. The processes of globalization, increasing intercultural connections and social tensions, continuing interethnic conflicts and the surge in national extremism – all of them call for taking educational measures to develop tolerance in youth. Mutual intolerance, resentment, callousness, violence and aggression are becoming the norm for young people and their behaviour today which makes it possible for extremism to enter our society. It is beginning to be apparent that for a society democracy and integration are only possible if they become more tolerant.

It is important to be tolerant towards other nations, cultures and religions. Tolerance indicates confidence in people, their full understanding of their own positions and it promotes free thinking that is not threatened by other perspectives.

Tolerance as a personality characteristic, that reflects one's attitude towards the whole world, people in it and towards oneself, can be fostered in a multicultural university. Higher education holds great potential for forming humanistic characteristics such as solidarity, cooperation, respects for the rights of other people and acceptance of diversity.

In The Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995) tolerance is defined as 'not only a moral duty but also a political and legal requirement'.

It is becoming obvious that modern society needs to develop and strive towards multi-culture which recognizes the equity of all cultures, promoted tolerance towards cultural diversity, counters racism, totalitarianism and any form of discrimination. This issue is particularly important for Russia – a multi-religious country in which 193 nationalities representing different cultures and languages found a home.

### **1.2. Theoretical and practical contribution**

We are offering an original methodology aimed at forming tolerance in university students that is based on the methods of the method of collaborative creative work, project-based method, dilemma method and brainstorming.

We have determined the effective mechanisms of instilling tolerance in students: the mechanisms of ethnic, psychological, religious and communicative tolerance.

We have developed the educational program that promotes tolerance among university students 'We are all different but we are all together' along with a plan of its practical implementation over the period of 2016-2021.

### **1.3. Literature Review**

#### **1.3.1. Russian academic literature review**

The issue of tolerance formation is developed in the works of Asmolov (2011), Soldatova (1998), Clayburgh (2012).

Scholars generally agree that tolerance is an ability to understand and respect the views of others, accept equity and reject oppression and violence (Asmolov, 2011). Soldatova (1998) in her works

highlights different aspects of ethnic tolerance. Ethnic tolerance is defined by the author as the absence of a negative attitude towards other cultures – one has the positive image of other cultures while maintaining the positive image of one's own culture.

Clayburgh (2012) developed taxonomy of tolerance types adding to the already existing types (mythological, ancient, religious, reformatory, philosophical, secular, academic) another important type – socio-psychological (deviantological).

Scholars see education as a very important factor in promoting religious tolerance in the context of globalization (Bondarenko, Demintseva, Kavykin, Sledzevsky, & Khalturin, 2007). The authors assert that multicultural education implies equal for all ethnicities opportunities to realize and fulfill one's cultural needs which also help the youth discover and understand the cultural and moral values of other countries. Engaging in a dialogue is very useful in building bridges between cultures (Bondarenko et al., 2007).

Dementev, Yarchikovskaya, Pristav, and Koval (2015) study the issue of tolerant relationships among the university students from different ethnic groups. They focus on possible strategies that can be used to promote tolerance among students participating in educational programs designed to improve their health. The authors propose using a combination of dancing warm-up sessions that draw upon traditional dances of different cultures along with using traditional music – this all aims to expand students' outlooks and make them more open towards other cultures. Kamalova and Raykova (2016), Gysina (2004), Kamalova (2015), Kamalova and Zakirova (2015) have been tracing the process of value formation in youth along with developing the criteria of educational work promoting tolerance within a university.

Kamalova and Raykova (2016) underline the importance of forming the criteria for the assessment of educational work in Russian universities using system-based structural and comparative analysis. Kamalova and Zakirova (2015) identify main professional values in student primary school teachers and study how they contribute to the formation of their professional awareness. Kamalova (2015) developed the issue of professional competency formation in the students of Kazan Federal University who study and prepare to work in a multicultural environment.

Today tolerance is discussed by leading scholars as a social and professional value that is a fundamentally important and integral element of social competency. Scholars generally agree that tolerance is the ability to understand and respect the views of others, to accept equity and to reject oppression and violence (Asmolov, 2011).

Moreover, modern scholars talk about several aspects of tolerance: religious, racial and ethnical. Cultural values along with different predispositions (towards conflicts or constructive interactions) can significantly influence an individual's tolerance towards people belonging to other ethnic groups (Soldatova, 1998). Clayburgh (2012) differentiated an additional tolerance type – socio-psychological (deviantological). Scholars stress that the process of tolerance development can only be effective if it is connected to the main spheres of a person's socialization and the formation of social competencies (Bondarenko et al., 2007).

### **1.3.2. International academic literature review**

Jones-Schenk and Harper (2014), Ollport (2002) over the course of studying how the emotional intelligence of students influences their studies and tolerance came to conclusion that students with higher emotional intelligence levels are more likely to complete their undergraduate degree successfully in comparison to students with lower emotional intelligence levels. Ollport (2002) writes that being in a multicultural space can lead some people to become more tolerant while leading others to become more intolerant (Ollport, 2002). Intolerance can be manifested in a variety of ways (ethnicity-related/nationality-related conflicts, minority discrimination, xenophobia-related aggression acts often towards migrants and refugees).

Ethnic aspects of the issue are developed in the works of Berberyan and Berberyan (2016), (Dunbar, Sullaway, Blanco, & Horcajo, 2004). In the course of studying ethnic groups in monocultural and multicultural places the scholars came to the following conclusion: the formation of ethnic awareness can happen on two levels – through understanding the value of ethnic integration and through assessing ethno-cultural and ethno-psychological characteristics of one's own ethnic group (Berberyan & Berberyan, 2016).

Dunbar et al. (2004) are focused on the issue of human rights and interethnic relationships in Spain. The results of their research show that human rights awareness correlates with positive attitude towards legislation set to protect human rights of ethnic minorities.

Bukhori and Hassan (2016), Abell, Manuel, and Schoeneman (2015) develop the religious aspect of tolerance. In their study Bukhori and Hassan (2016) are focused on how Muslim identity influences people's tolerance towards Christians. Abell et al. (2015) examine student attitude and behavior towards people of other religions (towards Muslims in particular) when conducting social work. The scholars came to the conclusion that multicultural practical work is necessary in social work.

Sehnm, De Luna, and Schaefer (2016) study the issue of intercultural education. Their findings lead them to the conclusion about the necessity of developing intercultural communicative competence in students – it enables students develop respectful attitude, tolerance, behavioural flexibility and communicability.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Tolerance as an integrative personality characteristic enables people to counter extremism and to increase security, stability and sustainability in society. One of the important goals of higher education is to instill in youth tolerant attitude towards different worldviews and cultural traditions.

## **3. Research Questions**

Available research related to this issue is rarely practice-orientated and do not offer practical instructions on how tolerance can be promoted in a multicultural university.

Academic and methodological literature offers the criteria of tolerance formation (assessment methods) which makes it possible to measure the level of tolerance. However mechanisms of tolerance formation in university students are hardly studied.

The majority of all available methods related to tolerance are designed to promote general student tolerance without specifically focusing on promoting ethnical, psychological, religious, communicative and linguistic tolerance – that are much needed in the current context of massive immigration and globalization.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to develop a set of methods that promote tolerance towards one another in students who study in a multicultural educational space. The following aims were determined as the most crucial for this research project: to consider different types of tolerance in the modern multicultural context; to design a methodology and a set of mechanisms that promote tolerance in students; to create a tolerant atmosphere that nurtures solidarity, cooperation, partnership and respectful attitude towards diversity and individuality.

#### **5. Research Methods**

##### **5.1. Research objective**

In the course of this study we were predominantly focused on the following items: 1) to study the works related to the history and theory of tolerant behaviour and its formation; 2) to theoretically justify the formation of tolerant attitude in students in the context of multicultural educational space; 3) to develop mechanisms of forming tolerance in students; 4) to test the effectiveness of the developed methodology and draw conclusions.

##### **5.2. Theoretical and empirical methods**

In order to test our hypothesis we have used a range of methods that complement each other:

- theoretical – the analysis of the works of psychologists who developed/are developing this issue; the analysis of methodological and educational literature (based on these works we formulated our hypothesis); theoretical justification of the methods effectively used in the work with migrant Muslim children learning Russian in primary school;

- empirical – participant observation, reporting and formative pedagogical experiment, surveys, tests, the analysis of the findings.

##### **5.3. Research base**

The research involved the 1 year students of Institute of Psychology and Education (Kazan Federal University). 106 students took part in our research project.

##### **5.4. Research stages**

Our research project was conducted in three stages:

The first stage involved designing experimental platform at Kazan Federal University where we observed the process of tolerance formation in students; where we conducted the surveys, assessed student tolerance levels and narrowed down our research focus. At the second stage we were working on forming the conceptual framework, organizing large-scale educational experiment among the 1 year

students of Institute of Psychology and Education. The third stage involved the analysis and systematization of findings.

### **5.5. Research methods**

In the course of the study the following methods were used: the scale of social distance (by Bogardus, the version revised by Pochebut); the tolerance and ethnic identity type test (by Soldatova and Ryzhova); the aggressive behavior test (survey designed by Bass and Darki); the communicative tolerance test (as cited in Boyko, 2008).

## **6. Findings**

### **6.1. The results of the reporting stage**

The first stage was organized involving 1 year students (106 people) in September 2016. The aim of this stage was to assess the communicative tolerance of students with the use of Boyko's (2008) methodology. The control group was 73 students. The experimental group was 33 people. Both groups were given tests designed to measure communicative tolerance in students through assessing their adaptability in the process of interacting with people. Each given answer could score from 1 to 3 points.

1. I find fussy and restless people annoying.
2. I can hardly stand loud games.
3. I usually react negatively towards flamboyant and eye-catching personalities.
4. A perfect person is suspicious.
5. I lose my temper with slow-witted people.
6. I dislike talkative people.
7. I would feel annoyed if I was stuck in a company of a person who kept talking to me but to whom I myself was completely indifferent.
8. I would feel annoyed if I was stuck in a company of a person who is less knowledgeable than me.
9. I would feel annoyed if I was stuck in a company of a person who is less intelligent than me.
10. I dislike: young people (certain hairstyles, fashions, etc.);
11. 'New Russians' (lack of culture and manners, self-serving behavior);
12. People of certain nationalities;
13. Certain types of men/women;
14. Classmates who demonstrate low academic performance;
15. I think that it is normal to respond in a rude way to rudeness.
16. I feel like it is difficult for me to hide it if I do not like someone.
17. People who are very stubborn and assertive irritate me.
18. I dislike self-assured people.
19. I can hardly help criticizing a person who pushes others in public transport/in a crowded place.

20. I have a habit of telling others what to do.
21. Rude people with no manners irritate me.
22. I often find myself trying to give lessons to those around me.
23. Out of habit I often make remarks and admonish people.
24. I like ordering people around.
25. I find annoying: elderly people in rush hour in public transport and shops;
26. Sharing a double room with a stranger;
27. People who disagree with me when I am right;
28. When people oppose my views;
29. When people do not do what I would like them to do;
30. I always hope that people who offended me will get their punishment in the end.
31. People often say that I am grumpy.
32. I maintain hard feelings for a long time if I was offended by a person who I appreciate and respect.
33. I find it difficult to forgive offensive jokes from my classmates.
34. If someone hurts my feelings on purpose I will take offence.
35. I judge whiny people.
36. I do not like people who talk about their illnesses.
37. I try to change the subject or exit the conversation when someone starts complaining about their family problems.
38. When friends try to confess something I hardly pay attention.
39. Sometimes I just feel like making my friends or relatives angry.
40. I usually find it difficult to compromise.
41. I find it difficult to get along with people who have bad temper.
42. It is difficult for me to meet new people.
43. I avoid weird people.
44. Out of principle I keep insisting on my position even if I understand that my opponent is right.
45. Slow people get on my nerves.

The results of this test (developed by Boyko, 2008) indicate the level of people's tolerance and their ability to hear and respect the views of others, to accept equity and reject oppression and violence (Table 1).

**Table 01.** The level of communicative tolerance determined with Boyko's test in both groups at the first (reporting) stage of the experiment:

Levels	Experimental group	Control group
High	4 people 11,2%	16 people 20%
Medium	9 people 28,8%	23 people 34%
Low	20 people 60%	34 people 46%

The results at this stage show that both experimental and control groups have roughly the same level of communicative tolerance: high level – from 11,2% to 20%; medium level – from 28,8% to 34%; low level – from 60% to 46%.

## **6.2. The results of the formative stage**

The formative stage involved 33 people from the experimental group and took place over the period from September 2016 till February 2017.

The main objective of the formative stage is to design and test a methodology that aims to promote tolerance among students studying in a multicultural university.

In order to develop tolerance in students we used the following methods: 1. Creative workshops oriented towards intercultural and interethnic dialogues. 2. The method of collaborative creative work. 3. Discussions and debates. 4. The dilemma method. 5. The method of brainstorming.

1. Creative workshops are the method based on humanistic pedagogical philosophy. This method can be practically applied by creating educational conditions that encourage students to express themselves creatively. Moreover, through organizing creative workshops students can be prompted to become self-aware and orientated towards realizing one's potential and becoming an independent learner. The teacher-instructor organizes creative workshops to help each individual student develop a range of skills necessary for intellectual and manual work. Moreover, it is important to make it clear to students that it is normal to collaborate and to make mistakes. Organising the workshop 'Happy childhood in the folklore of different peoples' enabled us to create conditions for the effective development of tolerance in students towards one another, towards other languages, different views, traditions, religions, dances and music.

2. The method of collaborative creative work – is the key structural component in collaborative creative education. This method presupposes active participation of all individuals in selecting, developing, organizing and reflecting upon collective educational activities. Each student gets an opportunity to decide his or her share of participation and responsibility. Through planning and organizing activities students gain valuable organizational experience as anyone can propose ideas, new approaches and then take charge of implementing them. Being engaged in our cultural project 'We are all different but we are all together' gave students an opportunity to learn more about other ethnicities and countries, their literature, languages and traditions. They were encouraged to take a reflective and critical perspective which helped them realize that all people share the same history, all ethnicities and nationalities made their contributions into the development of our world.

3. Discussions of complex questions that allow to consider different perspectives. One of the topics we offered to discuss was 'What does it mean to be a patriot?'. This discussion enabled students to look at patriotism from different angles and share personal experience related to the topic.

4. The dilemma method uses unfinished open-ended stories to assess the level of moral awareness and an ability to construct a coherent moral argument. The educator who uses this method selects stories that challenge different beliefs and contain moral conflicts. For example, we offered students to read a short story 'Three sons' by Oseeva (1977) and asked each student to express their opinions in regards to who they think could be described as a good son and why. This method enabled us to see if students put



family values above all others and to see how students understand such moral values as love, care and respect.

5. The method of brainstorming is an effective method for solving problems that is based on encouraging creative activity. Students were asked to openly express their ideas – as many of them as possible. Then out of all the proposed ideas students select the most promising – those that can be effectively realized in practice. Brainstorming gives students an opportunity to collaborate – they can work in teams and combine very different ideas. This way they are learning to understand and appreciate other people. Over the course of the brainstorming session named ‘You do not have to be a poet but you do have to be a citizen...’ (It is a line from a famous poem ‘A poet and a citizen’ by Nekrasov (2018) a lot of original ideas were expressed in regards to patriotism, citizenship, responsibility and moral choice.

### 6.3. The control stage of the experiment

The control stage of the experiment took place in February 2017. The main aim at this stage was to reassess the level of tolerance in 2 year students.

In order to measure students’ tolerance in both control and experimental group we used 4 assessment methods: The scale of social distance (by Bogardus), the tolerance and ethnic identity test (by Soldatova and Ryzhova), the general communicative tolerance test (by Boyko, 2008) (Table 2).

**Table 02.** The scale of social distance (by Bogardus)

Level	Experiment group	Control group
High	12 people (42%)	4 people (6%)
Medium	11 people (40%)	25 people (34%)
Low	2 people (8%)	44 people (60%)

The results derived with the scale of social distance showed that 42% of students in the experimental group had high tolerance level and 40% of them demonstrated medium level of tolerance which indicate generally positive attitude towards other nationalities and ethnicities. The control group, however, had much different results: only 4% had a high level whereas 44% of them demonstrated a low tolerance level which indicates certain intercultural tensions (Table 3).

**Table 03.** The tolerance and ethnic identity type test (Soldatova and Ryzhova). The levels of tolerance in both groups

Tolerance Levels	Experimental Group			Control Group		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
General	21 People 69,7%	11 People 30%	1 Person 0,3%	18 People 24,6%	20 People 27,3%	35 People 48,1%
Ethnicity	20 People 63,4%	12 People 36,3%	1 Person 0,3%	20 People 27,3%	20 People 27,3%	7 People 45,4%
Social	21 People 69,7%	11 People 30%	1 Person 0,3%	20 People 27,3%	22 People 30%	6 People 42,7%
As A Personality Trait	21 People 69,7%	11 People 30%	1 Person 0,3%	15 People 20%	20 People 27,3%	38 People 52,7%

All in all, at this stage the experimental group showed higher tolerance levels in comparison to the control group. 69,7% and 30% of the experimental group demonstrated high and medium levels of tolerance, including ethnical tolerance – with 63,4% and 36,3% of students having high and medium levels respectively. The results in the control group are much different: 24,6% showed high tolerance while 48,1% had low levels. 45,4% demonstrated low ethnical tolerance. However, the scale of social tolerance in this test demonstrated the following: 69,7% of the experimental group have high levels and 30% – medium levels whereas in the control group 27,3% and 30% have high and medium levels respectively. As a personality trait tolerance was also more common among the experimental group students – 69,7% had a high level and 30% had a medium level in the experimental group, 20% and 27,3% had high and medium levels in the control group (Table 4).

**Table 04.** The aggressive behavior test. The aggression levels in both groups:

Index	Experimental Group			Control Group		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Aggression Index	1 person 3,4%	3 people 8%	29 people 88,6%	19 people 26%	34 people 46%	20 people 28%
Animosity Index	1 person 3,4%	2 people 6, 6%	30 people 90%	18 people 24,6%	33 people 45%	22 people 30,4%

The results of this test demonstrated a significant difference between two groups. 88,6% and 8% of the experimental group showed low and medium aggression levels, 90% и 6,6% of them showed low and medium animosity levels. However, the control group had higher levels of aggression and animosity. 26% and 46% of them showed high and medium levels of aggression respectively. Animosity index showed the following results: 90% of the experimental group had a low level, 6,6% and 3,4% had medium and high levels. 30,4% of the control group had low levels, 45% and 24,6% had medium and high levels (Table 5).

**Table 05.** The communicative tolerance test (by Boyko, 2008). The level of communicative tolerance in both groups

Levels	Experimental group	Control group
High	24 people (71%)	15 people (25%)
Medium	7 people (21,2%)	27 people (37%)
Low	2 people (7,8%)	31 people (48%)

The results of this test demonstrated that 71% and 21,2% of the experimental group had high and medium levels of communicative tolerance while 25% and 48% of the control group had high and medium levels.

After having analysed all of the results we can conclude that the experimental group demonstrated higher levels of tolerance by the end of the formative experiment than the control group. Our findings are in accord with earlier research (Soldatova, 1998, 2004). The findings suggest there is a significant difference between the groups in their ethnical tolerance. Moreover, the difference between the groups was also noticeable in their aggression and animosity levels. The levels of communicative tolerance (measured with the test developed by Boyko, 2008) were higher in the experimental group.

## 7. Conclusion

In the course of our study we came to conclusion that the most effective way to develop tolerance in students is through encouraging them to think critically and independently. When students are learning to be tolerant they come to see that all people differ in their interests, views, appearances but they all have the right to express their individuality. We also established that certain methods are very effective in promoting tolerance. It is important to talk to students about the value of tolerance, to challenge their moral principles and to give them opportunities to experience a range of emotional reactions that are related to social norms and ideals (pity, sympathy, trust, gratitude, kindness, pride, shame, empathy, etc.). In order to influence students' actions and motives behind them it is important to help student become self-aware, reflect upon their actions, question their motives and intentions. Moreover, it is necessary to encourage students to develop moral ambitions that lead to tolerant behavior though direct demands and assignments might not be effective in this. Instead indirect requests might be more preferable (advice, hints, trust, approval, etc.). What is more, it is important to develop students' ability to take responsibility for their choices and actions (through working on conscientiousness, self-criticism, self-control, etc.) and to encourage them to strive towards constant moral development through getting them engaged in new types of relationships with new people.

We have developed the methodology aimed at developing psychological, ethnical, communicative and linguistic tolerance in students studying in a multicultural university. This methodology is based on the method of collaborative creative work, project-based method, dilemma method and brainstorming.

The use of methods aimed at developing different types and aspects of tolerance allows to develop tolerance as a holistic integrative personality characteristic that forms the basis of students' future professional work.

Our findings indicate that tolerance can be effectively developed through organizing special learning sessions and events with a range of orientations (cultural, creative, patriotic, heuristic, research and other orientations).

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