

MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE: FACTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The new perspectives of the development of multicultural competence are widely discussed all over the world nowadays. The call for further discussion on the topic of multicultural competence, as initiated by this paper, is intended to complement our foundations work on cultural dialogue from a more methodological point of view. Multicultural competence develops dynamically. It seems possible to develop an instrument to evaluate in an ongoing basis how to develop multicultural competence further within multicultural education. Multicultural education is a response to the conflicts and loss of identity that has resulted from globalization and internationalization and provides the dialogue between cultures as a basic element in its strategies to consolidate peace.

The authors of the paper show the importance of using the comparative studies as a significant contributor in many countries to better understand perspectives to analyze the new models, approaches and methods to develop multicultural competence. The ideas presented here attempt to visually organize the views upon which Russian intercultural experts have reached (i.e. factors of the development of multicultural competence, the ideas on the development of multicultural education, etc.). In regard to the factors influence the further ideas about the perspectives to develop multicultural competence the authors seem to feel strongly that one factor is not enough to ensure competence.

This article is a continuation of a series of articles about difficulties in developing of multicultural competence. The previously published articles are “The prospects of multicultural education in Germany and Russia” (V. Aniskin, V. Bogoslovskiy, T. Dobudko, S. Pisareva, T. Zhukova), “The role of comparative research in the development of multiculturalism within educational systems” (V. Aniskin, V. Bogoslovskiy, K. Bebell, T. Zhukova); “Characteristic of a model for multicultural competence development” (T. Zhukova).

Keywords: Multicultural competence, the factors of the development of multicultural competence, comparative study, multicultural education, prospects of the development of multicultural competence.

INTRODUCTION

Through the history people have advocated for an educational system that offers all students of different nationalities an equal opportunity to obtain an education in a multicultural world that will help them to improve the development of multicultural competence (T. Dobudko, A. Dzhurinskiy, M. Duzhakova, etc.). Some believe that such an educational system exists. Others describe the existence of a multicultural educational system still as an illusion. As the importance of internationalization and

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globalization has risen, education has changed as well. In this paper, the authors assert that such an educational system has not been achieved yet. Moreover, we conduct a research study of four contributing factors in the maintenance of an educational within multiculturalism. Finally we suggest implications to provide measures that influence the development of multicultural competence within multicultural education.

For the purposes of this paper, we will consider that a better model for multicultural competence is one that takes into account comparative study and the conditions of education systems across different countries (V. Bogoslovskiy, S. Pisareva, T. Zhukova, etc). This ongoing comparison provides an outline for understanding the premises necessary to develop models oriented towards the improvement of multicultural education while also bearing in mind a country's cultural characteristics.

In response to the increase in immigration the problems of multicultural competence development in Russia are widely discussed. Thus, teachers who have positive attitudes toward multicultural education are more likely to implement the new techniques and see the prospects of the development of multicultural education. Supporting this point, research has indicated many teacher education students (Samara State University of Social Sciences and Pedagogy, Samara, Russia) have negative attitudes about racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups that differ from their own. In a review of teacher education programs the authors of the paper find most teacher education programs had a limited number of programs or courses that addressed issues of cultural diversity. Recognizing the powerful effect quality teaching has on learning, we suggest *the key factors* required for all students to develop multicultural competence: *demographic, pedagogical and political*.

METHOD

The literature review consists of two components: a theoretical and empirical review of the literature and a conceptual framework. The theories reviewed in this paper serve the purpose of explaining the problem of study. The empirical studies lend support to the theories, propose alternate suppositions, and highlight the need for further study. The conceptual framework identifies obstacles to the instruction of the development of multicultural competence in the framework of multicultural education.

RESULTS

The authors conduct a research study of four contributing factors in the maintenance of an educational system that do afford the students to improve their multicultural competence. The four contributing factors under examination are (a) demographic, (b) pedagogical, (c) political.

Factors that Influence the Development of Multicultural Competence

Demographic Factors (a)

We live with immigrants and emigrants, with their languages, religions, attitudes - all of which have become part of local communities across the globe. These differences include the ways that people in diverse groups construct meaning of such concepts as human development, mental health, psychological maturity, and appropriate psychological helping interventions (I. Ignatova, I.B., E. Ekimova, etc.). It is worthwhile to consider the specifics of how to best organize teaching students. Teachers and students do resist cultural diversity. Such resistance among students ranges from inattention in class, failure to do homework, negative attitudes toward school, poor relationships with teachers, misbehavior, vandalism, violence, and dropping out of school (K. Hoehmann, T. Zhukova, etc.).

As can be seen below, research has been primarily focused on the following groups of problems:

1. *Psychological Problems* (psychological adaptation to the new sociocultural environment has been considered an important issue for immigrants' health). The research on problems influencing the adaptation of immigrants has demonstrated that characteristics as cultural and social isolation at schools led to such problems as nostalgia, feelings of grief and mourning, helplessness, anxiety, depression and pessimistic thoughts; low social status at school; feeling of being stigmatized exacerbated the participants' sense of incompetence; traditionally accepted role of men in Muslim families etc (V. Lonshakova, G. Palatkina, M. Shrenk, etc.).
2. *Problems in Speaking*: Many immigrants face a strong language barrier upon arriving to the new country. They experience an emotional breakdown at the isolation of being surrounded by those whose language is alien to them. Problems in speaking and understanding the foreign language makes it difficult to re-establish in the new environment (E. Bondarenko, Yu. Bocharova, etc).

Multilingualism (bilingualism) is a functional reality in today's world society. This reality challenge traditional visions of language education, where each language is taught one after another as first and successive foreign languages. In literature there are three types of bilingualism mentioned: *simultaneous bilingualism* (to be successful in this method, the parents have to be fluent in both languages when speaking and they have to use the two languages when speaking to the child without compromise); *successive bilingualism* (in this type of bilingualism parents decide to establish first a basis of knowledge in the first language in their child. The second language is introduced when the child is more than three years old); *artificial bilingualism* (if none of the parents has a different native language

or they do not live in a foreign country but they want their child to grow up bilingually, artificial bilingualism is a method to apply).

3. *Pedagogical Problems:* Children usually demonstrate: problems facing educational policies and practices in different countries; adjustment of structures of education bearing in mind cultural differences and the overall cultural climate in class; varieties of curriculums etc. More recent models have tended to stress the integrative aspects of culture, and in particular the role of integration in teaching social and cultural aspects. Indeed, the concept of “integration” has become something of a fashionable cliché in culture teaching in recent years (A. Dzhurinskiy, M. Duzhakova, etc.). A typical answer to the question about the problems is that they do not have these problems at all. However immigrants talk about a lot of difficulties they are experiencing and how traumatic it is for them very often. The framework of the above mentioned problems demonstrate the importance of the formation of tolerance, of awareness and responsibility for the values of different social and cultural identifications and readiness to create professional development opportunities in a multicultural educational environment (J. Fleischer, D. Leutner, E. Klieme, E.).

Pedagogical Factors

The study of different social and cultural life and institutions has been a traditional part of secondary and high school curricula in Russia. In a review of teacher education programs we consider that introducing different cultures in a social studies class does not satisfy a multicultural education. As well we should mention the fact that teachers have long recognized the need to teach the culture both of the host and country of immigrants. However, in recent years, a more open recognition of the need to understand the immigrants’ culture led to a more critical awareness of the host community’s culture.

We have to recognize that this subject itself has broadened as a result of the integration and globalization and should include culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions, especially as expressed through language, but also through cultural behaviours that affect acceptability in the host country.

James A. Banks, a leading researcher in the field of multicultural education, focused on the analysis of a “culture universality” that defines the essence of culture. Although there is a growing interest in culture universalities there is still a lack of analysis of the approaches and methods that is well grounded in the theory of teaching cultures (E. Bondarenko, Yu. Bocharova, K. Hoehmann, A. Lanfranchi, L. Vershinina, etc). It is worthwhile to consider the specifics how to best organize the development of multicultural competence.

As can be seen from the researches concerning the new views to teaching multicultural competence (A. Thomas, K. Bebell, G. Hofstede, T. Zhukova, etc.) it is important to assess different tasks for students that focus on the below mentioned activities: the formation of multicultural personality traits; readiness of implementing professional work in a multicultural educational environment; to use the databases for tasks such as drafting joint presentations with students of other countries, writing essays analyzing projects from other countries' databases; to work with publications in foreign languages, including informative and communicative technologies, using translation programs for both educational and extracurricular activities, and fostering familiarity with on-line dictionaries, encyclopedias and business-related documents; to assess educational programs for students of different ages that focus on multicultural competence development; to analyze proposed methods for working with educational programs, the organization of educational practice in comparable countries, the development of specific assessment materials, recommendations regarding how to organize interaction with representatives of other cultures throughout the learning process, the establishment of multicultural interaction, the development of recommendations for parents on the multicultural educational process, guidance on ways to resolve cultural conflicts, to learn the characteristics of a multicultural learning environment, various ways of organizing multicultural support; the development of personalized educational plans in order to further international cooperation in the development of a database for storing information about multicultural education programs, and associated materials, such as multiculturally-oriented lesson plans; to provide psychological and educational diagnostics for an individual development of a multicultural personality etc (D. Lehman, C-Y. Chiu, M. Schaller, etc.).

We propose the following series of information gap tasks.

Information Gap Task 1

Answer Key: It is difficult for teachers to imagine themselves in many work situations (although they should be able to work with immigrants). Draw on the problems they are likely to find themselves in when they work with immigrants. Which of the problems do you think we should rate the mostly highly in choosing a student to learn?

Task: You have four immigrants in your class. They have language, social and psychological problems.

Preparation:

- Review the literature on the problems or difficulties of immigrants.
- Give teachers of different countries a mini-questionnaire related to the problems they have with immigrants.
- Think of the further actions to adapt to your country.

- Involve immigrants in a prediction activity to anticipate the difficulties and problems they can have.
- Make a project.

Information Gap Task 2

Answer Key: The degree of control needed to assessment of tolerance depends on the country the students come from. A class may not be able to cope with a full-scale debate about the tolerance but they might be able to discuss their opinions with a help of a teacher.

Task: You work at school and have some difficulties to teach students with another cultural background. As well you have problems to teach your students to be tolerant. You do not know a lot about the people who belong to another culture.

Preparation:

- Review the literature on the problem of assessment of tolerance.
- Analyze the teaching practice at schools of different countries.
- Work in groups and suggest your variation on ranking tolerance.
- Make an on-line project.

Information Gap Task 3

Answer Key: We can create a feeling that work with is immigrants is difficult without realizing it. It is common to hear we have many problems with immigrants. More often than not these negative feelings have been induced by learning approaches which overemphasized difficulties and over-highlighted learners' errors.

Task: Children who belong to different cultures have a conflict. Every child thinks he is right.

Preparation:

- Understand the reason of the conflict
- Prepare a list of actions to prevent conflicts.
- Improvise the situations to prevent conflicts in your class.
- Work in groups and draw on situations children are communicating with people of different nationalities.
- Analyze the situation and think about you further actions. Speak with parents about it.

Information Gap Task 4

Answer Key: Self-education is the key aim of modern education. Experience of different countries is important.

Task: You have a child from Germany in your class. German education provides free education that gives opportunities to vary individual work at home and at school.

Preparation:

- Review the literature on the problem of individual work of children at school.
- Analyze educational websites or discuss the problem with a student from a higher education institution in Germany.
- Divide the class into groups of three or four. Their tasks are to imagine that they are at school to organize individual work for children.
- Discuss the tasks for children with your teacher.

Political Factors

Discussion about the role of government to implement multicultural education is often absent. One of the ways in which discussion is avoided is through the continued belief in the myth that multicultural education exists. When such education is challenged it is considered propaganda. On the contrary, the exclusion of alternative views is not considered a political act. However, the consequences of not naming or challenging the dominant culture view in the areas of education are most profound for students who belong to different societies.

A number of publications of Russia are dedicated to the problem of the role of government to multicultural education development. It includes the theories and practices that have the aim to promote the further achievements for further researches (I. Ignatova, E. Ekimova, A. Korotkov, etc.). The authors believe that “including content from different ethnic and cultural groups, developing positive attitudes, providing equal educational opportunities and creating the environment with equal status for all requires implement education within the context of multicultural integration” (K. Bebell, V. Bogoslovskiy, S. Pisareva, L. Goedegebuure, L., F. van Vught, T. Zhukova, etc.). This view on education can effect the way to develop multicultural competence. Thus, it is important to answer the above mentioned questions and attempt to show what we can do is to raise awareness of cultures. In so doing, we shall aim to sharpen observation to develop further views on the problem.

The mechanism by which multicultural education is integrated in different countries will vary and depends on many factors. Until recently the predominant view of multicultural education has been regarded using disciplinary and interdisciplinary concept, in which individuals are expected to learn cultural identities to blend them in to the predominant mainstream society. The authors believe this model cannot be considered the good model useful in the process of globalization and internationalization. Different mechanisms of integration are appropriate for different countries. It is necessary to select processes appropriate

the development of transnational education clusters. They influence the work of international teams to examine the link between educational resources between different countries.

Research Questions:

- What are the prospects to develop multicultural education?
- What is the relationship between multicultural education and multicultural competence?

DISCUSSION

Although all of the theoretical contributions have greatly expanded the role of multicultural education to development of multicultural competence base, it is equally important to understand what researchers have to say about the impact this movement has had on the effective implementation of comparative researches with culturally diverse impact in a higher institution. It is important to do so, in part, because teachers are responsible for implementing approaches, programs and methods.

The first stage is to understand the need to preserve, support and see the role of the varieties of different cultural practices which are already exist in modern education. Reserach in this paper shows that the decision about how to apply multicultural education in teaching students show be left to each institution. Recently many talks have been held concerning hot to improve and further the developments of multicultural competence. This goal is to develop a curriculum focused on mulicultural competence by adding new and diverse materials in order to more thoroughly meet the needs of traditionally underrepresented groups (V. Bogoslovskiy, K. Bebell, T. Zhukova).

The second stage is to incorporate cooperation between institutions. The authors of the article believe that multicultural education operates on many levels: institution, regional and state. It is important to review the specifics of each level and identify opportunities for the development of scientific research at each field. The authors attempt to define new indicators of researches in higher education to improve the educational system at institutional, regional and state levels:

1. *Higher Institution level:* It considers efficiency within universities under new conditions. To do so, it is necessary to consider facets of cooperation when creating police aimed at changing the role of national values. Higher education must drive the development of new values within the context of cultural integration (A. Luijten-Lub A., M. van der Wende, J. Huisman, O. Saginova, A. Sogenov, B. Wulfson, etc.).

Recently, many talks have been held concerning how to improve the process to understand national values. The goal is to develop a curriculum focused

on the values within the context of multicultural integration by adding new and diverse materials. It is crucial to be aware of the specific characteristics of an individual’s mentality, or the overall worldview shared by members of an individual society.

2. *Regional Level:* The authors of the article believe that we have to spend more time looking for links between regional and state levels. Similarly, it is essential to examine both the cultural values and the representation of those values. Local cultures are changing and are combining with others in new and unusual ways.
3. *State Level:* Research in this paper shows that the decision about how to apply state policy to each country. However, in order to facilitate the integration of different educational systems around the world, institutions of higher education should work towards a unified selection of educational models, programs, approaches and technology to use in each university’s own curriculum. The table below show how different educational systems, specifically the view important elements of the education.

TABLE 1: PROSPECTS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

1	Characteristics on multicultural education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis of traditional teaching approaches which must be reconstructed to examine how they contribute to and support national curricula. • The analysis of national educational systems which must be presented from diverse cultural preferences and perspectives. • Readiness among countries to integration to foster a positive attitude to multicultural education. • To examine educational institutions administrative process in order to assess whether an institution offers a consistent program to develop multicultural education.
2	Resources concerning the development of multicultural competence within multicultural education	Analysis of educational policies in higher education of different countries – structure of institutions, assessment of teaching approaches to multicultural education development; traditional teaching approaches and pedagogical models; national curricula; academic subjects; readiness amongst teachers and students to foster positive classroom climate; scientific researches on: (professional education, multicultural education, multicultural education within integration and globalization) etc.
3	Adjustment to multicultural education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technologies to improvement students’ multicultural competence. • Technologies to adjustment of an integrative environment in a higher school varying social and cultural identities and the overall cultural climate. • Anti-crisis technologies to adjustment of multicultural education.

CONCLUSION

This article presents the outcomes concerning the initial multicultural education at different levels in different countries what are faced with a common challenge to educate cultural diversity. Although there is a growing interest in the importance of multicultural competence there is still a lack of theoretically well-grounded comparative studies in different countries. Topics such as factors which influence the process of multicultural competence development are not broadly discussed. This paper addresses this problem by discussing theoretical questions behind the development of the new mechanisms to improvement of multicultural competence. The authors of the article focuses on analyzing the positions of the Russian scientists as regard multicultural education development, one of the conditions necessary for the improvement of the foundations of multicultural competence. Research in this paper shows that the decision how to apply multicultural competence should be left to each educational institution of the region or the country. However, in order to facilitate the integration of different educational systems around the world should work towards a selection of educational models, approaches and technologies.

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