



IRYNA KOZUBOVSKA

Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine
Užhorodo nacionalinis universitetas, Ukraina

TARPKULTŪRINĖ KOMPETENCIJA KAIP KULTŪRINĖS KOMPETENCIJOS DALIS. SOCIALINĖS SRITIES SPECIALISTŲ UGDYMAS UKRAINOJE

Intercultural Competence as a Part of Cultural-Competent.
Training of Social Sphere Specialists in Ukraine

SUMMARY

In connection with the aggravation of interethnic relations and interethnic conflicts in today's society, the problem of effective intercultural interaction exists. In this article intercultural competence is considered as an important component of the cultural-competent professional training of specialists (pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, etc.) who work directly with people in multicultural regions.

SANTRAUKA

Dėl šiandieninėje visuomenėje ryškėjančių konfliktų tarp skirtingų etninių grupių ir ryšių tarp jų blogėjimo ypatingą svarbą įgauna veiksmingos tarpkultūrinės sąveikos problema. Straipsnyje analizuojamas tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos ugdymas, kaip svarbus kultūros specialistų (pedagogų, psichologų, socialinių darbuotojų ir kt.), tiesiogiai dirbančių su daugiakultūrinių regionų žmonėmis, mokymo komponentas.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of interethnic relations, peaceful coexistence of different cultures has always been among the most important priorities of Ukraine's national pol-

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: tarpkultūrinė kompetencija, kultūros kompetencijų ugdymas, socialinės srities specialistai, Ukraina.
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icy. Ethno-national policy implies that the values of national culture are a dialectical unity of national and universal, national and ethno-specific, regional. Valuable content of national culture can act as the driving force of social progress only when the creative potential of such a culture is based on the general system of values produced by ethno-national community, nation, people and humanity throughout its history.

Intercultural education is first of all concerned with people who interact on a daily basis in multicultural educational contexts (teachers and learners, policy makers and administrators etc.) and deal with all the material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional aspects of the differ-

ent value systems, traditions and beliefs and ways of life (Huber 2018).

Social sphere specialists are to be prepared to accept the idea of multicultural society and of positive attitude towards other cultures, which emphasizes the importance of the problem of their intercultural competence. Knowledge and skills of work in the multicultural environment combined with self-reflection can prevent false professional assessments and actions possible through the stereotyping of certain groups of population.

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the importance of formation of intercultural competence as a part of cultural-competent training of social sphere specialists.

CULTURE AND COMPETENCE: DEFINING THE NOTIONS

To enter the discussion of culture-competent training and in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion we first clarify the related key concepts.

Among the variety of definitions and methodological approaches to the study of "culture" we are in favour of the following, based on the classification of scientific accessory (culture is the subject of research of a science) (Brislin 2000; Richard-Amato & Snow 1992; Samovar et al. 2015):

- Sociology – culture is a factor in the organisation of social life, as a set of ideas, principles, social institutions that provide collective life activities of people. Culture is what defines the social aspect of the human from the point of view of acquired behaviour. Culture is dynamic, as well as an in-

dividual who has adopted the given culture, and both of them (an individual and culture) change under the influence of circumstances and time;

- History – culture is a product of society history and develops through the transfer of experience gained by an individual from generation to generation. It determines the ways in which groups of people standardise and canonise accepted norms of behaviour, as well as methods by which society expresses the rejection of inappropriate behaviour patterns;
- Psychology – culture is a way of life. It is the context in which we exist, think, feel and communicate with each other. It is a programme, set in an early childhood, which manages the behaviour of people in a society and

helps them understand their actions. Culture can be defined as ideas, customs, skills, methods and techniques that characterise a certain group of people in a certain period of time;

- Pedagogy – culture is a set of qualities, not inherited genetically, a person gets in the process of education and upbringing. Culture consists of ideals, values and perceptions of life, inherent in people, determining their behaviour. It is cultivated, assimilated from childhood and passes from generation to generation;
- Anthropology – culture is the totality of results of human society in all spheres of life. Each person acts as a culture carrier he / she grew and formed in as an individual. However, when meeting with representatives of foreign cultures, people begin to realise that there are other forms of emotions, types of behaviour, ways of thinking, which significantly differ from the usual and the known. All these diverse impressions of the world are transformed in human consciousness into ideas, settings, stereotypes, expectations and become important regulators of behaviour and communication.

As noted by A. Sadokhin, the perception of a foreign culture significantly differs among people. It depends on the person's age, behavioural settings, life experience, available knowledge, etc. (Садохин 2012).

Special studies (Фрейнкман-Хрусталева & Новиков 1995) on the problem of perception of another culture have allowed distinguishing six types of reac-

tion to a foreign culture and behaviour of its representatives:

1. Denial of differences in cultures – is based on recognition that all people share the same beliefs, settings, norms of behaviour, values. It is a typical cultural-centred position by which all people are to think and act the same as representatives of "my" culture.
2. Protection of own cultural superiority – is based on recognition of existence of other cultures with the formed consistent notion that the values and customs of another culture constitute a threat to the established order, ideological principles, and lifestyle. This type of perception is realised by asserting personal cultural superiority and disregard for other cultures.
3. Minimising the cultural differences – is based on recognition of possibility of existence of "another-cultural" values, norms, forms of behaviour and of search for common, unifying features.
4. Perception of existence of cultural differences – is characterised by possession of knowledge of another culture features, a friendly attitude towards it, not involving the active assimilation of its values and achievements.
5. Adapting to another culture – is expressed in a positive attitude towards it, the assimilation of its norms and values, the ability to live and act according to its rules while preserving personal cultural identity.
6. Integration into another culture – foreign culture norms and values are assimilated to such an extent that they begin to be perceived as personal, native.

The combination of these types suggests that a tolerant attitude to intercultural differences involves the overcoming of cultural isolation and the possibility of establishing of a productive intercultural interaction, under which we understand the various forms of interaction between individuals, groups or organisations belonging to different cultures.

O. Ovcharuk sees competence as a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are acquired in learning and allow people to understand, identify and evaluate in different contexts the problems that

are peculiar to different fields of activity (Овчарук 2009).

I. Demura puts forward the view that competence is the estimating category, characterising an individual as a subject of specialized activity in the system of social development of labour, bearing in mind the level of development of human ability to make qualified judgments, to take adequate responsible decisions in problem situations, to plan and perform actions that lead to rational and successful achievement of goals set (Демуря 2007).

CULTURAL-COMPETENT TRAINING

The formation of intercultural competence of future specialists is facilitated by the organisation of cultural and educational environment of an educational institution, which usually involves three components: spatial-semantic (architecture of the educational institution, interior design, symbols and other information); content-methodological (the concept of training and education of students, curriculum, methods and forms of organisation of education, student self-government bodies, research work of students); communicative-organisational (national features of students and teachers, their values, settings, style of communication, etc.).

In psychological-pedagogical studies (Газарызова 2000), educational environment is viewed as a multidimensional social and psychological-pedagogical phenomenon, linked in a single whole by various communicative mechanisms, having situational influence on the development of value orientations of a fu-

ture professional, relationships and ways of behaviour, laid in the process of assimilation, consumption and distribution of socio-cultural values.

Educational environment can be considered as a subsystem of the socio-cultural environment, as a combination of historically formed factors, circumstances, situations and as the integrity of the specially organised pedagogical conditions of the students' personality development. In modern studies (Слободчиков 2000), educational environment is considered as a category that characterises the development of an individual, which determines its purpose and function in the context of objectivity of society culture. Local educational environment is a functional and spatial unity of education subjects, between which tight diverse group interrelations are established.

We support the opinion of K. Prykhodchenko, who believes that the technology of establishing the creative educational environment leads to an update

in the development, contributes to the formation of a new type of a specialist. The scientist sees the creative educational environment as an innovative and communicative technological system of education, aimed at ensuring of favourable comfortable conditions for the development and self-development. The researcher describes the concept of “educational environment” as a unity of actions of educational institutions, families, state institutions, civil elements of information and cultural environment. According to the scholar, the technology of establishing the creative educational environment contributes to the domination of the intellectual creative work of an individual as the main gain of any society (Приходченко 2011).

Appeal to the subjective-environmental approach focuses on the very interaction and mutual influence of the environment and the subject. From the standpoint of a subjective-environmental approach, the environment is not only a means of formation but also a means of development, through which the subjective experience of an individual expands. Subjective-environmental approach is the methodological orientation of cognitive and practical pedagogical activity, which is aimed at studying and using the developmental potential of interaction between the environment and the subject. After all, the environment can influence the subject only in the process of interaction. The subject-environment approach defines the environment as a means and factor of development and the product of social activity of educational process subjects (Червінська 2015).

Social environment is a complex multilevel unit, particular displays of social relations taking place in a society an individual lives and develops in. It is a set of social conditions of human life and environment that affect consciousness and behaviour. The features of social environment include: the level and nature of opportunities for self-actualisation and self-realisation, the displays of individual abilities and creative potential of an individual; the level of unity and uniformity of development of its spheres, etc.

In recent years, Ukrainian institutions of higher education have begun intensive work to provide a special multicultural educational environment based on universal values, which involves forming the readiness of future specialists for the dialogue, intercultural cooperation. Multicultural educational environment is the place for discussions, allowing students to learn how to solve problems and conflicts of intercultural interaction through dialogue, cooperation and compromise. It gives an idea of the meaning of the existence of mankind in general. It forms the qualities necessary for the successful integration of an individual into another culture. It develops the skills of tolerant behaviour of people in the multicultural society.

Within multicultural educational environment the following tasks are solved: to raise respect for the representatives of other nationalities, their language, customs, traditions, spiritual values; to provide opportunity for every student – carrier of native culture – to enter the Ukrainian and world culture; to form basic culture of an individual, directed on national and universal human moral

values, achievement of human civilization, awareness of belonging to the world community; to disapprove any displays of nationalism and racism.

Thus, multicultural environment of an institution of higher education presents a spiritually rich atmosphere of business and interpersonal contacts that determines the worldview, the way of thinking and behaviour of subjects involved. It is the environment for the positive interaction between individuals, groups, cultures representing different ethnic groups, cultures, religions, institutions with multicultural, multi-religious and multi-confessional contingents of teachers and students, called to meet educational and social needs of an individual in a multicultural society.

Summarizing the standards of cultural-competent practice of social sphere workers, as well as personal traits they are to possess, we generalise that intercultural competence involves: observing of ethical norms and values of the profession; understanding of personal cultural attitudes and beliefs, empathy, tolerance; possession of cross-cultural knowledge and skills, intercultural skills of work with representatives of various ethnic-cultural groups, ensuring the effectiveness of professional activity.

In providing intercultural competency for future social sphere workers, special attention is given to the formation of readiness for communication in a multicultural environment, since this phenomenon: is one of the criteria for the development of the outlook culture of a future specialist (consciousness, cultural self-cognition and activity) in spe-

cific spheres of social life; is an indicator of the level of social and cultural development achieved by a society; predetermines deeper human knowledge of each other; acts as a factor of rapprochement and cooperation of cultures; acts as the regulator of relationships – defines the ways and forms of communication; represents a set of different norms (ideological, political, moral, cultural) of interaction and direct communication of representatives of cultures; promotes the growth of general culture of people; is a means of socialising an individual.

Readiness for intercultural communication is characterised by the following important components:

- intellectual – knowledge of the peculiarities of different cultures: history, language, religion, customs, traditions, communication in a multicultural environment, the presence of a coherent imagination of the multicultural picture of the world;
- valuable – value relation to the peculiarities of different cultures; identification of oneself as a representative of a particular culture; perception of other cultures and their representatives; resistance to situations of controversial nature with the participation of representatives of different cultures and prediction of an acceptable exit from them;
- operational – observing social norms and requirements of society regarding interaction in a multicultural environment; the ability to establish contacts with representatives of different cultures, while taking into account their age and gender characteristics.

As noted earlier, intercultural competence implies the presence of intercultural communicative competence of social sphere workers. Readiness for communication in the multicultural environment is considered as an integrative quality of an individual, which is characterised by a high level of knowledge about this sphere of social reality, a positive emotional and value relation to the peculiarities of different cultures, and the ability to work productively with their representatives. The essence of this phenomenon is the interconnection of the internal (the character of the value relations of students to the peculiarities of different cultures and their representatives) and the external (orientation of communication in a multicultural environment, which involves cooperation and mutual understanding of its subjects) as a holistic property of an individual. Formation of intercultural competence of social sphere specialists helps to master their ability to study the peculiarities of the multicultural environment in which they live and carry on their professional activities.

In the process of training of future specialists for the work in the Ukrainian multicultural social environment attention is paid to:

- the formation of direction in a specialist for: the professional activity in a polyethnic region; the work with representatives of any nationality; the desire to master knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the suc-

cessful work with representatives of various ethnic groups, etc.;

- the mastering of knowledge on: the laws of the development of nations, modern tasks and ways to improve interethnic relations; the peculiarities of particular ethnic groups and national differences; the means and methods of studying the ethno-cultural environment, etc.;
- the skills to use rationally the methods and means of studying the ethno-cultural environment and to carry out professional work in a specific multicultural social environment based on the results of the studying.

Students learn the basic principles of studying the multi-ethnic social environment: systematic (as a system with different components); dynamic (its formation, development); practical orientation (clear knowledge of what to study and for what purpose); focus on meaningful components (to distinguish the most important components for the in-depth study); consistency and logic (each subsequent step should be a logical continuation of the previous one); loyal attitude towards all ethnic groups; prognostic (to see the near and long-term perspective of the development of the research object); scientifically grounded (specific research plan developed, a variety of methods applied); taking into account of individual, age and ethno-psychological personality characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

Aggravation of interethnic relations actualise the issue of effective intercultural interaction, which plays an impor-

tant role in the work of professionals who provide assistance and support to different categories of people in multi-

national and multi-religious communities (pedagogues, psychologists, social workers). Social sphere specialists are to acquire intercultural competence – the degree of displays by a specialist of knowledge, skills and abilities that allow to: (i) understand, identify and evaluate in different contexts the problems that are peculiar to particular fields of activity; (ii) correctly assess the specifics and conditions of interaction, relationships and communication with representatives of another culture, displayed in the peculiarity of their traditions, habits and psychological qualities; (iii) find adequate forms of influence on them in order to maintain the atmosphere of mutual trust and constructive cooperation aimed at achieving jointly defined goals.

The intercultural competence of future social sphere workers is formed in

the process of studying in the institutions of higher education during classroom work, field practice, extracurriculum professionally directed work. An important precondition for the formation of intercultural competence is the creation of a special multicultural educational environment with tasks set: to raise respect for the representatives of other nationalities, their language, customs, traditions, spiritual values; to provide opportunities for every student – carrier of a native culture – to enter the Ukrainian and world culture; to form the basic culture of an individual, oriented on national and universal human moral values, on achievements of human civilisation; to form the awareness of belonging to the world community; to condemn any displays of nationalism and racism.

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