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# Intercultural education at the university: from theory to practice

## Abstract

This article deals with the problem of intercultural education in the university space. The theoretical analysis of the problem is presented along with the results of diagnostics of certain aspects of intercultural education of teachers and students. Then, practical directions of its improvement are defined, alongside an explanation of the development of the system of concepts and representations about the intercultural space, finishing with the development of a positive attitude to a multifaceted cultural space, values and professional ethics, etc.

K e y w o r d s : culture, cultural awareness, intercultural education, cultural co-operation, intercultural interaction, tolerance, professional ethics.

**Edukacja międzykulturowa na uniwersytecie: od teorii do praktyki**

**Streszczenie**

Artykuł porusza problem edukacji międzykulturowej w środowisku uniwersyteckim. Wysłany teoretyczna analiza problemu, wyniki diagnozy pewnych aspektów nauczycieli edukacji międzykulturowej i studentów, określa praktyczne sposoby jej poprawy, rozwoju pojęć i wyobrażeń o środowisku międzykulturowym systemowych; rozwój pozytywnego podejścia do wielowymiarowego środowiska kulturowego, tolerancji, etyki zawodowej i tak dalej.

S ł o w a   k l u c z o w e : kultura, świadomość kulturowa, edukacja międzykulturowa, współpraca kulturalna, interakcje międzykulturowe, tolerancja, etyka zawodowa.

## Introduction

The swiftness of the changes taking place in the globalised world affects many areas of our lives, especially education. Transformational processes and reforms that take place in the educational field of many European countries, actualising fresh problems and tasks. The most important amongst them is the formation of culture of a person who is capable of cultivating the ability to live in the space of different nations and cultures. Therefore, it is no coincidence that amongst the key competences for training a person during their lives – as defined in Recommendations 2018/0008 (NLE) of the European Parliament and the Council (January 17, 2018) (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning) – is the Cultural Awareness and Expression (Cultural awareness and expression competence) of individuals are recognised as leading among other competencies[1]. This presence of the concept of "cultural awareness" in scientific diction-

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[1] COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1519558512590&uri= CELEX:52018DC0024 (20.05.2018)

ary is due to the fact that it helps to characterise the phenomenon of extremely active interaction of a range of cultures in the XXI century.

The domination of today's cross-cultural approach in understanding the interaction of representatives of differing cultures makes it possible to study the differences of culture in different groups and societies from the standpoint of cultural relativism. Scientists pay attention to this fact by noting that in the process of educational activity, a person is able to get acquainted with various cultures, and not only to form a certain ethnocentric position (belief that his own culture exceeds other cultures)[2].

It should be noted that in the works of the American researcher on intercultural communication M. Bennett, attention is paid to the processes of ethnocentrism and ethno-relativism. The researcher identifies six stages of human personality development in relation to intercultural interaction: three ethnocentric (rejection of intercultural features, protection from difference in favor of their ethno group, minimisation of difference) and three ethno-relativistic (recognition of difference; adaptation to the difference between cultures or ethnic groups; integration)[3]. The stages of recognition, adaptation and integration are impossible without the cultural awareness of the individual.

First of all, a more important but not a negative element is the process of immersion of the individual in the world of culture and awareness of its cultural diversity. In this context, it is important to rely on the scientific position of scientists that culture and personality are a single system whose elements are interconnected. Research by David Matsumoto in the field of culture proves this and points out that culture itself

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[2] E. Makarova, *Cultural awareness as a factor in overcoming ethnocentrism and the formation of tolerance of behaviour in the conditions of humanization education,* In: *Materials of the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Tolerance in the Modern World: An Interdisciplinary Research Experience"*, ed. E. Makarova, 2011, p. 356.

[3] M. J. Bennett, *Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.* In: *Education for the intercultural experience*, ed. R. M. Paige. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press 1993, pp. 21–71.

is a mitigating factor in the manifestation of the universal states of representatives of various ethnic groups[4].

Consequently, the cultural-making component in the content of modern education makes it possible to perceive the personality of the peculiarities of his life in an intercultural environment, the development of senses of understanding and respect for other cultures, and the ability to live in harmony and peace with people of different nationalities, races, and beliefs. It is such an environment that is an obligatory part of the process of cultural formation of the individual and the space of intercultural interaction of its subjects.

### Scientific views on the problem

Many scholars approach the theoretical and practical study of the problem of interculturality. We agree with the opinion of the famous scientist O. Dzhurynskyi that the formation of a person in the context of cultural diversity pursues three groups of goals that can be denoted by the notions of *pluralism, equality and association*. Pluralism it is about respecting and preserving of cultural diversity, while equality is about the maintenance of equal rights to education and upbringing, and association is about the formation in the spirit of universal and spiritual values. It should be noted that in the cultivation of respect for other cultures, tolerance is only the beginning of the accession to other cultures. This should be followed by understanding, respect and, finally, active collaboration (interaction, interdependence, interchange) based on the understanding of the peculiarities of different cultures[5].

In her research, Ukrainian scientist S.O. Sysoieva[6] has also drawn attention to the problem of the formation of a person's culture in the

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[4] D. Matsumoto, *APA handbook of intercultural communication*. Washington, New York 2010.

[5] A.N. Dzhurynskyi, *History of Foreign Pedagogy: Manual for high schools*, Moscow 1998, p. 272.

[6] *Cultural and historical legacy of Poland and Ukraine as a factor in the development of multicultural education,* ed. V. Kremin, T. Lewowicki, S Sysoieva, Khmelnytsky 2011, p. 433.

context of a globalised world in which representatives of different cultural traditions, languages, confessions and other elements coexist. The researcher highlights the following principles that actualise this problem:

- priority of the person and its development;
- multiculturalism and tolerance in the intercultural space;
- convergence and globalisation;
- the transition from the knowledge paradigm of education to the competency;
- orientation towards the sustainable development of civilisation;
- continuity and fundamentalism of education;
- informatisation.

Consequently, in the context of these principles, interculturalism can be defined as the coexistence in one environment of representatives of two or more cultures that differ in language, religion or recognised values, the possibility of mutual penetration, personal contacts, the dynamics of coexistence and interaction, as well as the constant links between groups. The essence of interculturalism as a phenomenon is the awareness of the personality of the cultural difference that determines the response to the difference, the organisation of interaction, the degree of openness or closeness and differences in different spheres (according to J. Nikitorowicz)[7].

This is what the Polish scientist Jerzy Nikitrovich clearly formulated as the concept of "intercultural education". The researcher understands the processes of formal and informal education that influences the formation of positions and principles enabling productive, open interactions between representatives of different cultures in order to gain the benefit of skills of dialogical conflict resolution, optimal interaction between representatives of different cultures and ensuring peaceful coexistence[8].

In the scientific aspect, the above problem was studied in various aspects on the part of philosophers, sociologists, culturologists, psycholo-

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[7] J. Nikitorowicz, *Grupy etniczne w wielokulturowym świecie*, Gdańsk 2010.

[8] J. Nikitorowicz, *Edukacja regionalna i miedzykulturowa*, Warszawa 2009, p. 531.

gists and educators. In the pedagogical aspect, the problem of intercultural competence is most actively investigated recently (O. Berezivska, L. Goncharenko, O. Goncharova, B. Zhankina, A. Zubko, V. Kuzmenko, A. Maslov, S. Sysoieva, A. Chyrva, L. Shkutina and others). Here, Polish scientists are of great interest to this problem (O. Gorzeńska, B. Dobrowolska, J. Jabłeka, E. Ogrodzka-Mazur, I. Kubak, T. Lewowicki, E. Laska, J. Nikitorowicz, A. Świdzińska and others) and their scientific papers are covered above-mentioned aspects.

It should be noted that in Polish pedagogical science, there are two terms that have own specifics: "polyculture education" and "intercultural education". Thus, according to Polish researchers, "polyculture education" involves the non-conflict existence of a community of different cultures alongside it, while "intercultural education" is aimed at the mutual enrichment of the cultures of neighbouring social groups. The first group of education allows for cognitive asymmetry where a minority group must know and take over the culture of the dominant group and may cultivate its own customs. Intercultural education is aimed at the equal integration and mutual enrichment of subjects of the educational process[9].

Returning to the role of education in the development of intercultural consciousness and the corresponding behaviour of the individual as a future professional, the educational space of a modern university is a powerful resource. By its very nature, it is multinational, composed of representatives of different cultures and religions. It also reflects the readiness of university professors to educate students and tolerant attitudes toward the unevenness of people in the intercultural environment depending on its harmonisation and the development of social communication skills in multifaceted cultural diversity.

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[9] *Cultural and historical legacy of Poland and Ukraine as a factor in the development of multicultural education*, ed. V Kremin, T. Lwowicki, S. Sysoieva, Khmelnytsky 2011, p. 433.

## Study procedure

It was conducted a survey among teachers and students of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University in the framework of the implementation of the tasks of the international project №21720008 "Competences of high school teachers in the age of change", which is devoted to the diagnostics of the competence of high school teachers and funded by the International Visegrad Fund. The survey was conducted in 2018 with a total sample of 125 teachers and 269 students. One of the questions aimed to reveal the readiness of teachers and students to make tolerant attitudes to people's dissimilarity in an intercultural environment.

The study demonstrated that 69.6% of teachers were aware of the problem and understand intercultural education of students, so identifying intercultural tolerance in the educational environment. However, 30.4% did not have a stable position regarding their readiness to show tolerance to the unevenness of people in the intercultural environment. Students' expectations also confirmed the importance of the intercultural aspect in university education. Thus, 69.9% of respondent students were convinced of the importance of acting in an intercultural environment, while 24.16% of students have an unstable position on this issue, 5.94% do not consider intercultural education to be important to foster a tolerant attitude to the unevenness of people in the intercultural environment.

These findings are evidenced by the fact that there are many opportunities for the development of teachers' and students' readiness to act in the intercultural space, the ability to solve any professional issue, based on universal values: goodness, justice, respect for the rights and dignity of others, social justice, etc. In this context, the problem of intercultural education, the development of tolerance as integrative ethical quality of both teachers and students is very relevant because it is what determines their behaviour in various life situations.

According to V.G. Kremen[10], tolerance today is a requirement of time and the actual issues of the present because now "there is a rejection of the moral, ethical and spiritual values created by humanity in the process of historical development. Raising the motive of profit in the rank of the ethical principle is a kind of distortion of this deep and hopelessly false ideology".

In modern psychological and pedagogical literature, the notion of "tolerance" is often equated with the term "nonviolence". However, in our opinion, the concept of "tolerance" is much more complex and in its intrinsic nature and structure absorbs the above-mentioned terms. Tolerance acts as a general paradigm of behaviour, an indicator of personal understanding of man of good and evil as an ethical basis of life and a principled refrain from setting his will above the will of another, emphasising his ability for free action amongst other elements.

Interculturalism in the content of university education has a developing influence on all subjects of the educational process. Teachers are a special moral model and an example of tolerant behaviour for students. At the same time, tolerance in the professional activity of the teacher is based on compliance with the norms and principles of pedagogical ethics. Hence, professional ethics is a science of the moral value of relationships in the educational process, their regulator. Therefore, the questionnaire provided for the question of compliance with the rules of professional ethics by the teacher with all subjects of the educational process.
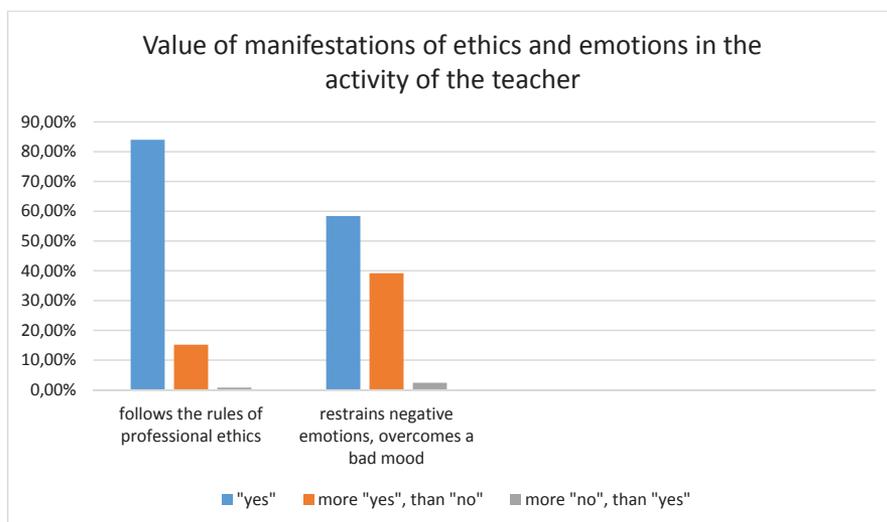
Here, 84% confidently answered "yes", which testifies to the compliance of the teachers of higher education with the norms of pedagogical ethics in different subjects of the subject areas of interaction. Only 15.2% of teachers do not have a sufficiently stable position to build their professional activities on the basis of professional ethics, while 69.14% of students evaluating the activities of teachers noting that 30% of teachers do not always adhere to the rules of professional ethics.

The connection between the emotional sphere of man and ethical behaviour is very close. All emotions and feelings are also character-

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[10] V. G Kremen, *Tolerance as an Imperative: National Identity in the Age of Globalization*, "Day", no. 42–45, p. 6.

ised by polarity; that is, they have a positive or negative shade, usually reflecting the attitude of the object to reality (love-hate, joy-summation, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, etc.). The emotional sphere of a person is significantly influenced by her vital position: the notion of herself, the way of seeing the world and its place in it. Changing a life position can contribute to constructive personality changes: preserving the balance, forming internal freedom, self-esteem, confidence, etc.

The questionnaire here has also included the diagnosis of the teacher's ability to deter negative emotions and overcome bad moods. Here, 54.8% of teachers say they can overcome negative emotions, while 39.2% have doubts about managing their emotions in different situations, including intercultural communication. Students were more demanding for teachers, with 62.08% unambiguously stressing the need for teachers to manage their emotions, while 28.6% of students had a relatively unstable position. At the same time, 7.43% of students say that teachers do not often restrain their emotions and do not make efforts to overcome negative emotions. The diagram shows the ratio of the above characteristics.



Value of manifestations of ethics and emotions in the activity of the teacher

Hence, to build ethical relations with all subjects of the educational process teachers are often hindered by emotional distraction, inability to overcome bad mood, negative emotions. Furthermore, high indicators in the diagnosis of compliance by teachers with the norms of professional ethics which, in our opinion, indicate a bit about subjectivity in the assessment of teachers of their professional behaviour. The afore-mentioned direction influences the choice of teachers how to organise intercultural interaction with representatives of different nations, cultures and confessions.

## Discussion and conclusions

Consequently, the development of the readiness of modern teachers to stage intercultural interaction in the educational environment of the University implies, on the one hand, their intercultural awareness acquired in the process of intercultural education, while ensuring the formation of their professional ethics, emotional management and overcoming of negative emotional states.

A teacher from higher educational institution begins his professional activity with an already-formed personality, which has its own personal and professional values, along with the experience of intercultural communication. Therefore, increasing the level of intercultural education of teachers in the conditions of the university can be organised in four directions: socio-cultural identification; development of a system of concepts and perceptions of the intercultural space; development of a positive attitude towards a multifaceted cultural space; and formation of intercultural competence. One of the main educational tasks in this regard is the raising up of spiritual culture, which most clearly manifests itself in people's interactions, and especially in intercultural communication between representatives of different nationalities.

Let's briefly describe each of the components.

Socio-cultural identification, according to E. Erickson, is a special entity for explaining the change in the ratio of social and personal, bio-

logical and social[11]. Identification in the most general form means the process of emotional, national, ethnic, cultural and other self-identification of individuals with another person or a group that is very important for the intercultural communication of the university teacher. The process of socio-cultural identification should be interpreted as a complex multifaceted process, where the basis is the values of socio-cultural space.

In the conditions of socio-cultural instability, the process of determining such values is complicated. However, for a teacher, such a value-oriented personal and professional compass should have universal values: humanism, respect, freedom of the other, justice, responsibility and others. This is emphasised by Ukrainian scientists[12, 13] (I. Bekh, V. Ogneviuk, P. Sauh, O. Savchenko, L. Khoruzha and others), as well as Polish[14, 15, 16, 17, 18] (T. Levovitsky, Y.Nikitovorovich, E.Ogrotska-Mazur, Ya. Raikovskyi, M.N. Urlinska and others).

The increase of the level of intercultural education of teachers and students in the conditions of the university also involves the assimilation of a system of concepts and ideas about the intercultural space. Such a cognitive basis will make it possible to understand the breadth of the problem, its interdisciplinary and to identify features in accord-

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[11] E. Erickson, *Dzieciństwo i społeczeństwo*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 416.

[12] V. Kremen, *Tolerance as an Imperative: National Identity in the Age of Globalization*, "Day" no. 42–45, p.6.

[13] L.L. Khoruzha, *Ethical development of the teacher: Textbook. Academic edition.* 2012, p. 208.

[14] T. Lewowicki, *Wielokulturowość i edukacja*, "Ruch Pedagogiczny" 2010, no. 3–4.

[15] J. Nikitorowicz, *Grupy etniczne w wielokulturowym świecie*, Gdansk 2010.

[16] E. Ogrodzka-Mazur, *Wartości cenione przez uczniów z pogranicza polsko-czeskiego*, In: *Sfery życia duchowego dzieci i młodzieży z pogranicza polsko-czeskiego. T. 1. Przemiany wartości i aspiracji życiowych,* eds. T. Lewowicki, E. Ogrodzka-Mazur, A. Minczanowska, G. Piechaczek-Ogierman, Cieszyn–Toruń 2016.

[17] J. Reykowski, *Rozwój moralny jako zjawisko wielowymiarowe*, In: *Indywidualne i społeczne wyznaczniki wartościowania*, eds. J. Reykowski, N. Eisenberg, E. Staub, Wrocław 1990.

[18] M. M. Urlinska, A. Uniewska, J. Horowski, *"Po życie sięgć nowe…" Teoria a praktyka edukacyjna*, Toruń 2012.

ance with the specific areas of activity of various subjects of the educational process. The Ukrainian researcher N.V. Yaksa has developed a terminology block for teachers and students, which allows us to understand the essence of various concepts that characterise the intercultural sphere[19].

The development of a teacher's positive attitudes towards a diverse cultural environment is a prerequisite for understanding cultural differences in social and educational spaces. These differences give them polyphony and multidimensionality. The basis of such an attitude is always the following psychological mechanisms: settings, values orientation and adaptation to the peculiarities of the environment. The meaning and purpose of the activity affect the nature of intercultural interaction. A certain guide for the teacher to develop a positive attitude to a diverse cultural environment is the following ways of action, described by N.V. Yaksa[20]:

- trusteeship;
- mentoring;
- partnership;
- cooperation;
- commonwealth;
- co-creation.

Consequently, a teacher's positive attitude towards a diverse cultural environment can occur only on a subject-to-subject basis, taking into account the universal invariant values.

The development of the intercultural competence of the teacher, and, accordingly, the student, is a certain result of the abovementioned aspects of interculturalism. This competence is an integral characteristic of a specialist and is based on the assimilation of different levels of culture: interethnic, national, social and professional. Important components of intercultural competence are the proficiency of the teacher in foreign languages, professional mobility, involvement in the process of internationalisation of education, and so on. It should be noted

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[19] N. V. Yaksa, *Intercultural interaction of subjects of educational process: Textbook*, Zhytomyr 2007, p. 312.

[20] Ibid., pp. 85–86.

that the content of the concept of "intercultural competence" is being constantly transformed and filled with new meanings. Moreover, the readiness of modern teachers to intercultural interaction in the educational space of the university involves, as mentioned above, a high level of professional ethics, the ability to manage emotions, overcome a bad mood, and a negative emotional state.

In the general context, *pedagogical ethics* is an integral part of ethics that reflects the specifics of the functioning of morality in a holistic educational process, where there is a science of the various aspects of the moral activity of a teacher. Ethics here covers socially significant elements of social morality, acts as an integrative characteristic of the professional activity of the teacher, defines the moral and ethical requirements for him and reflects the degree of their transformation in consciousness and behaviour, while influencing the choice of its tactics.

Ethics is an integral part of every pedagogical action. After all, the teacher is constantly in a state of moral choice. All relations, which are formed in the conditions of pedagogical activity, are derived from the level of formation in the subject of professional ethics.

The ethical component in the structure of intercultural education is realised, first of all, through an understanding of ethics and ethical categories that determine the orientations of the moral actions of the individual in a society of different cultures. These can be attributed to:
- human life;
- respect for human rights and respect for its honour and dignity;
- Motherland as a spiritual environment for the development of each nation;
- communication and cooperation as the exchange of values of national-ethnic cultures, etc.

Human behaviour in an intercultural environment is not only based on relevant ethical values, but also self-determination in the choice of a particular model of intercultural interaction. These aspects have already been covered by the author in the article "Ethical component of

multicultural education"[21]. Self-determination is closely related to the processes of reflection and self-actualisation of the individual, which significantly affects the emotional control and self-regulation of the personality of their mental states.

A certain emotional reaction of the individual in a particular situation of intercultural interaction depends on the level of her intelligence. The higher this level, the easier it is for a person to understand the reason for the mismatch between the desired and the expected, and thereby manage emotional reactions. The emotional side of intercultural interaction is hence significantly influenced by the attitude of its members: the person's perception of himself, the way of seeing the world and his place in it, the ability to maintain balance and to identify inner freedom, self-esteem, confidence, etc.

Consequently, the problem of intercultural education does not lose its relevance in today's globalised world; on the contrary, it acquires new accents, needs further reflection, theoretical and practical study. The teacher and student in the intercultural university environment are the main subjects of the educational process. It is necessary to diagnose in time the peculiarities of the culturally developing, axiological and ethical development of these subjects in the educational environment of the university, the nature of their interaction, the problems that arise. The results obtained will serve to increase the level of intercultural education for first and foremost teachers and then students in the conditions of the university, to determine the content and technological support aimed at establishing the following: socio-cultural identification; intercultural competence; professional culture and ethics; development of a system of concepts and perceptions of the intercultural space; the development of a positive attitude to the multifaceted cultural environment and other components necessary for a personal and professional life in a modern intercultural, globalised world.

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[21] *Cultural and historical legacy of Poland and Ukraine as a factor in the development of multicultural education*, ed. V. Kremin, T. Lewowicki, S. Sysoieva, Khmelnytsky 2011, p. 433.

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