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CURRENT STAGE, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

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Abstract

The relevance of addressing this topic is determined by the fact that in the modern world the ratio of national and universal values requires a special relationship: on the one hand, it is important to preserve the originality of ethnic cultures, and on the other, it is necessary to take into account their mutual influence on the processes of globalization, integration and internationalization. In this regard, there is a need to restructure the domestic system so that national education becomes a means of integration in poly-ethnic and multicultural societies, ensuring the preservation and development of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. The leading method in the study of this problem was the method of theoretical analysis of the scientific and methodological literature, regulatory documents in the field of multicultural and multilingual education. The article reveals that the problem of multicultural and multilingual education has become the subject for close attention of scientists, professors abroad, as well as domestic researchers due to the trends of integration, globalization, and the growing consolidation of modern society. Despite the Kyrgyz Republic has a sufficient regulatory framework for the development and support of multicultural education, the authors identified existing problems and the lack of a mechanism, methodology and technologies for the implementation of multicultural education and the preparation of teachers who are ready to work in a multicultural environment.

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, characterized by such trends as globalization, internationalization, and integration, one of the priority areas for the modernization of national education and the further development of the entire Kyrgyz society is multicultural education. The relevance of addressing this topic is determined by the fact that in the modern world issues of cultural diversity, the need for interethnic dialogue and cooperation, the relationship between national and universal values require special attention: on the one hand, it is important to preserve the originality of ethnic cultures, and on the other, it is necessary to take into account their mutual influence on globalization, integration and internationalization processes.

These trends in the development of educational systems in many countries, including Kyrgyzstan, have identified the goals of multicultural education which aimed to make people “peaceful and in harmony with representatives of different nationalities, races, beliefs” (Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2008; Bessarabova, 2007, p. 122), in other words, it is necessary to create conditions for preparing the younger generation for life in polycultures om society.

The accession of Kyrgyzstan to the world educational platform, the adoption of the principles of the Bologna Declaration increase the mobility of students and teaching staff, increase the academic exchange of students and teachers, and in this regard, the need to adopt a foreign language culture and traditions is crucial. As Krasnova (2013) noted

the development of modern civilization, associated with the desire of individuals and entire nations to acquire their ethnic identity and affirm it for their sociocultural environment, is one of the factors in the actualization of multicultural education. At the same time, scientific and technical progress and the informatization of society have a great influence on the formation of a multicultural space. (p. 22)

Speaking at the first forum of Kyrgyzstan and Russia university rectors on March 27, 2019 President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov noted that the issues of promoting the development of sociocultural and scientific and educational integration on the Eurasian territory, as well as researches aimed at studying the history, culture and traditions of our peoples much meaningful for the future of our countries, education fosters respect for different cultures and languages (Jeenbekov, 2019). Undoubtedly, the relevance of multicultural education is also determined by the economic, political, cultural and social development of society.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a young, independent, multinational state which has representatives of more than one hundred ethnic groups with their own history, language, and cultural characteristics.

Unfortunately, the tragic events of 2010 that occurred in the southern region of the country, the events of 2012 in the Chui region, the meetings in January 2019 showed that there are some inter-ethnic differences and misunderstandings in Kyrgyzstan. There is a lack of readiness of young people to live in a multicultural society; inability to resolve conflicts in non-violent ways, and, ultimately, a low level of social competence.

The UNESCO International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, led by Jacques (1996), identified four “pillars” of education of the 21st century, four key competencies for the future education, one of which is “learning to live together”. This important document emphasizes that education and upbringing should help ensure that “on the one hand, a person realizes his/her roots and thus can determine the place he/she occupies in the modern world, and on the other, instill in him/her respect for other cultures” (Jacques, 1996, p. 45). The task of modern education in this context is “the perception by the younger generation of their own culture and the promotion of a respectful attitude to the cultural values of other nationalities (Bondarevskaya, 2010; Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2008).

In this regard, there is an urgent need to restructure the domestic system in such a way that national education could become an integration tool in polyethnic and multicultural societies, ensuring the preservation and development of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. “An important response to this challenge can be the development of multicultural and multilingual education at all levels of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic” (Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2012; Vygotsky, 2000, p. 145).

2. Problem Statement

The methodological basis of our analysis is the studies of Russian, foreign, Kyrgyz scientists, as well as legal documentation. In the Pedagogue Encyclopedic Dictionary, multicultural education is interpreted as

education that is built on the ideas of preparing the younger generation for life in a multi-ethnic and multicultural environment. The purpose of such education is the formation of the ability to communicate and cooperate with people of different nationalities, races, religions, and to understand the identity of other cultures, thus, to eradicate negative attitudes towards them. A modern person should be tolerant with a developed sense of respect for people of a different culture, who can live in peace and harmony with them, with a willingness to interact actively. (Bezrukova, 2000, p. 125)

A retrospective analysis of the idea of multiculturalism indicates the presence of deep historical roots. The issue of child personality development in a multicultural environment was touched upon in the philosophical and pedagogical works of: Kant (2007), Disterveg (1956), Komensky (1982a), Pestalozzi (1981), Kapterev (1982), Makarenko (1985), Sukhomlinsky (1979), Ushinsky (1953) and others. For instance, Komensky (1982b) discussed the tolerance development, specifically, if people could live together with respect for one another’s values. A similar point can be seen in the reflections of Pirogov (1952) and Roerich (1996) on the relationship between the national and the common human with the “beneficial synthesis” of culture and education.

Modern professors also pay great attention to the concept of multiculturalism. According to Bondarevskaya (2010), “multiculturalism” is the creation of various cultural environments where human

development will be carried out, and where he/she will gain experience in culture-congruent behavior and he/she will be supported in cultural identity and self-realization of creative potential and abilities (p. 26).

Nowadays, multicultural and multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic is also becoming one of the main issues among scientists, specialists, teachers, psychologists, the general public, provoking big discussions. The Education Development Concept of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2020 notes the need to consider cultural and ethnic diversity as an important resource for the development of modern society (Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2012).

The results of the legal and regulatory framework analysis of multicultural and multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic. There are a lot of different ethnic groups with their own history, tradition, national-cultural characteristics and language in Kyrgyzstan. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic has developed the "Concept of multicultural and multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic" (2008) which is a document that provides strategic approaches in accordance with modern requirements in the field of multicultural and multilingual education. A purpose of the document is to promote inter-ethnic harmony, unity and the integrity of the country, based on the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity of the Kyrgyz Republic; the transition from a multilingual country to a multilingual individual"; the formation of a multilingual citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic who has the skills to live in a multicultural society. The Kyrgyz Republic has developed a sufficient legal and regulatory framework for the development of multicultural and multilingual education, including the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (Art. 45, etc.); Law "On the state language of the Kyrgyz Republic"; Law "On the official language of the Kyrgyz Republic"; National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2013-2017; "Жаны доорго кырк кадам 2018-2023-жылдарга", "National Program for the Development of the State Language and Improving Language Policy in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014-2020"; "The concept of strengthening the unity of the people and inter-ethnic relations in the Kyrgyz Republic" and "The plan of priority measures for the period 2013-2017"; "The concept of the education development until 2020"; "Strategy for the education development in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2012-2020"; "The concept of multicultural education in the Kyrgyz Republic" and the "Target Program for the Development of Multicultural and Multilingual Education in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2008-2020".

3. Research Questions

To achieve this goal it is necessary to conduct the following issues:

- 1) Research and explore scientific publications of Russian, foreign and Kyrgyz scientists in the field of multicultural education, regulatory and legal documentation to analyze the theoretical and methodological basis of multicultural education;
- 2) Consider the benefits and results of the introduction of multicultural and multilingual education at all levels of the educational system in the Kyrgyz Republic;
- 3) Identify the problems and contradictions in the introduction of multicultural and multilingual education;
- 4) Analyze further prospects for the introduction of multicultural and multilingual education; Making conclusions and recommendations in this field.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to analyze the current situation of multicultural education, identify existing problems in this area and determine the future prospects for the introduction of multicultural and multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic.

5. Research Methods

The method of theoretical analysis of the scientific and methodological literature and regulatory documents in the field of multicultural and multilingual education was used as a leading method. This method was used to further analyze and identify the problems and to determine the prospects of multicultural and multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic.

6. Findings

The results of the analysis of multicultural education in Kyrgyzstan. The process of introducing multicultural and multilingual education in Kyrgyzstan is at an early stage. In 2000-2004 an attempt was made to implement multilingual and multicultural education in Kyrgyzstan. The Swiss organization SIMERA, and the association “Til-Dil” implemented two- and trilingual education models in kindergartens and elementary schools in Bishkek, Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Osh, and Chui regions. The methodology was successfully tested, but the initiative, unfortunately, was not further disseminated. At the moment, the main directions of professional development for teachers have been identified and the studies of the experience of introducing multilingual education in Kazakhstan, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia “Multilingual and multicultural education with a view to integration” was of no small importance. The experience gained is summarized, analyzed and used to create and improve multilingual and educational programs.

Multilingual and multicultural education begins with the development of the native language and the gradual learning of other languages. Currently, there are specific events, seminars, conferences that are held in Kyrgyzstan under the program of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and the UN Children's Fund in the Kyrgyz Republic – UNICEF which is working on the project “Unity in Diversity”. This pilot project aims to promote multilingual education in Kyrgyzstan at all levels of the educational system. 78 schools (about 3%), 17 kindergartens, 5 pedagogical universities, 10144 students (20% of the total number of students from pilot schools), more than 500 teachers were involved in this pilot project. Educational organizations from all 7 regions of Kyrgyzstan (kindergartens, schools, universities) participated in the implementation of the multilingual education program: Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Batken, Chui, Osh, Jalal-Abad, Talas regions. In total 78,175 people were involved.

Multilingual education provides great opportunities for the development of language competence for most preschool organizations in Kyrgyzstan. It is known that the process of language learning for children is much easier and painless in the childhood rather than at an older age, and a child has more chances to learn second language perfectly, but only in the case when the learning process is properly organized. The second language learning in pre-school educational organizations takes place both in special language classes and in classes of the all other program sections and in everyday life situations.

First of all, in second language learning process it is very important to arouse the interest of children. If children are interested in learning, they easily overcome difficulties, master the material well, as a result, they acquire strong speech skills. For preschool organizations, it is advisable to use the model of partial immersion (1 person - 1 language). It is also necessary to focus on acquaintance with the target language through the development of basic communication skills in the process of daily practice, in physical education, drawing, music, etc. At the same time, do not forget to support their native language.

In elementary school, a multilingual education program implies 30-50% of study time for partial or bilateral immersion. From one to five subjects are taught in the target language. After adaptation of students, the use of the target language increases up to a full immersion in the pilot project. In the teaching of the state / official and foreign language, a communicative-functional approach is used. The methodological basis is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) - integrated learning of the subject and language.

Secondary and senior high schools implement multilingual and multicultural education through the development of oral communication skills or language development at the academic level to obtain vocational education in the target language which is determined by a set of subjects studied in the target language in partial or full immersion approach. Language immersion on subjects that were studied on a bilingual basis continues. The methodological basis is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) with the communicative-functional approach.

The implementation of multicultural and multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic provides several advantages:

Strengthens social cohesion in society;

Creates conditions for preserving the cultural and linguistic diversity of society and for culture enhancing of international communication;

Gives more opportunities to the students for quality education, develops language competence, contributes to the formation of communication skills and intercultural communication skills, and to the understanding the value of the society diversity and tolerance.

The results of multicultural and multilingual education in schools:

1. The interest in professional growth and development opportunities has increased among teaching staff;
2. In 4 universities of Kyrgyzstan, teacher training programs were being tested for multilingual schools and preschool educational establishments, 1,295 students are enrolled in 38 groups of bachelor programs;
3. Training of teaching staff has started at Batken State University;
4. On the basis of the Republican Institute for Advanced Studies, the Center for Innovative Technologies for the Advanced Training of Language Teachers has been established, which supports native, second, and foreign languages, as well as monitors multilingual education programs;

Based on a modular storage system advanced training courses are developed and tested on:

- planning multilingual education programs for teachers of educational organizations;
- Second language teaching methodology for teachers of the state and official languages;

- Subject and language integrated teaching method for teachers of subjects;
- method of developing child's speech skills for preschool teachers of preschool educational establishments;
- communicative methods of state language teaching for state language teachers in the of preschool educational establishments.

More than 350 teachers and representatives of the education system of Kyrgyzstan learned about the experience of multilingual schools in Kazakhstan, more than 40 people learned about the experience of Estonia, 10 people of Finland.

The program "Multilingual and Multicultural Education" allowed Kyrgyzstan to present its experience and receive the support of experts from Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Russia, the Netherlands, Georgia, etc.

National trainers and consultants were prepared; moreover, the advanced training on communicative-functional methods of teaching the target language and assessing the students' educational achievements was developed.

There is ongoing cooperation with the center "Innove" and with Narva College from Estonia on the development of the CLIL approach (integrated subject and language learning) in a distant format - webinars, consultations, master classes, etc.

Kyrgyzstan has developed the "Program for the implementation of multilingual education in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2030", the purpose of which is the gradual introduction of multilingual education at all levels of education in the Kyrgyz Republic as a tool for integrating society and developing human capital.

There are problems and contradictions in addressing the issue of multicultural and multilingual education in Kyrgyzstan, the cause of which, on the one hand, is the efforts of teachers aimed to educate a person who is able to build relationships and develop in a multicultural space, and on the other hand - a low level of culture in interpersonal communication, and in business environment. The methods of language teaching used in schools and in higher education institutions, and existing textbooks do not correspond to modern teaching approaches of multilingual education. There are no teachers who can teach subjects in English and in other languages; likewise, there are no teachers who are familiar with the methodology of integrated teaching of the subject and language; there are no systems of support and motivation of teachers to work in multilingual programs; at the system level, there is no monitoring and control over learning outcomes, and finally, the actions in various programs are uncoordinated and there is no funding. An analysis of the graduate teachers readiness to work in a multicultural society confirms that their professional and cultural level does not always meet the requirements.

The analysis of the relationship between education and culture has revealed the need to build an educational process in universities on the principles of a multicultural approach, which in turn leads to the recognition and transition to student-centered education, determining the competence formation for readiness to work in a multicultural society with skill value attitude to oneself and others. The tolerance development towards other cultures was not mentioned or indicated in the training process of future teachers aimed for activities in the multicultural space and for the final educational purposes. It is

necessary to note that in the new State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, the following requirements are included in the mandatory requirement for training bachelors:

“...is able to follow ethical and legal norms that are regulating relations in a multicultural society and is able to create equal opportunities for students regardless of intercultural differences (SPC-2 (social-personal competencies) (Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015)”); moreover, it is clearly indicated in the expected results: “can analyze the culture and traditions of the Kyrgyz people and other nations, be prepared for social interaction with representatives of different nations” (Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015, p. 98).

7. Conclusion

Multicultural education in the innovative preparation of students of the higher school of the Kyrgyz Republic promotes the creation of a multicultural environment which helps to develop professionalism in student’s cultural identity through dialogue, knowledge, and students’ inclusion to the national and universal culture. The knowledge of multiculturalism contributes to the language skills development of students and provides further self-realization in the multicultural world and contributes to the rapid socialization of graduates. Despite the existence of developed legal and regulatory framework that is aimed to support the implementation of multicultural education in the Kyrgyz Republic, this document does not specify the mechanism for the formation of this competence and the step-by-step stages to achieve results. These problems of the competence formation are presented to the teaching staff, and these problems are touched upon in the goals and objectives of the educational and educational process.

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