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**DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE OF MODERN
RUSSIAN YOUTH THROUGH PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the issues of the value of cultural competence among today's youth. This study was carried out on the basis of the analysis of modern foreign and Russian Cultural and Social studies. At the beginning of the article the author presents the basic concepts of cultural competence. The author analyzes the work of Kolosovsky, Mosakvoski, Lynch and Hanson, Raven, Flier - researchers of this theoretical problem in the Russian and European Humanities. The author analyzes the problems of formation of cultural competence in the field of secondary and further education of children and the youth. The main input of the article is to study the cultural competence within the framework of socio-cultural projects. In the article the results of research how to improve the cultural competence among students, pupils and teachers were described. The experience of the project "The world in the palm" of the Centre for Work with Gifted Children "Dar" is described. This project is being implemented in Rostov-on-Don in 2012 and is aimed at the formation of cultural competence and cross-cultural communication skills among the youth. The project promotes the development of international cultural cooperation based on the principles of respect for identity, diversity and mutual enrichment of cultures.

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1. Introduction

First of all, it is worth revealing the content of the concepts “culture”, “competence”, “cultural competence”. The concept ‘culture’ should be understood as human activity in different forms, including forms and life style of human being in the world, ways of human activity, and accumulation of human achievements (Paniotova, 2014). Moreover, culture may be defined as the manifestation of human nature, competencies, skills, and knowledge.

The Modern Economic Dictionary defines competence (from Latin “competens” – appropriate) as the knowledge and experience in that or other area (Raizberg, Lozovsky, & Starodubtseva, 1999). Cultural competence is the skills of a subject allowing it to adapt and work effectively in different cultures. According to Earley (2002), cultural competence may be defined as “the ability of human beings to adapt at interaction with representatives of different cultural regions, as well as it has behavioral, motivational and metacognitive aspects” (p. 99).

Formation of cultural competence as a theoretical problem is being studied by many modern scientists such as Kolosovskaya (2006), Sterlikova (2009), Flier (2000), Earley (2002). The need to study this phenomenon has appeared relatively recently in Russia due to the development of the processes of social modernization and informatization and, as a result, due to the need in professionalization. Cultural competence has many definitions: intercultural competence, cross-cultural competence, cross-cultural literacy, intercultural competence but the term “cultural competence” is used more often.

Kolosovskaya (2006) describes cultural competence as the holistic quality of a personality, including knowledge of the characteristics of different cultures and countries, the ability to interpret foreign cultural information, experience of communicative activities, as well as personal qualities (empathy, tolerance).

Various aspects of cultural competence formation and formation levels are considered by Henvi (1994) in his work ‘Achievable Global Perspective’. According to Henvi (1994), cultural competence is the subconscious understanding of differences between the own and foreign culture, which is achieved due to cultural literacy and knowledge of the peculiarities of culture and peoples.

Henvi (1994) distinguishes four levels of cross-cultural literacy. At the first level a person get the knowledge of basic, most obvious behavioral and mentality features. These features are perceived as something exotic and later they become stereotypes. The second and third levels are aimed at familiarity with the essence of cultural differences, which are in contrast to our own culture. But if it is seemed that these features are ridiculous and irritating at the second level, they are perceived as rather justified and even rational at the third level. The fourth level is related to the possible perception of culture by a culture-bearer. This level is elusive, but a specific feature of human personality allows achieving at least several aspects of the fourth level (Henvi, 1994).

Nevertheless, according to the works of Zeer (2006), Novikov (1997), Flier (2000), the cultural competence, i.e. the right perception, understanding and evaluation of culture and traditions, belongs to the number of those personality characteristics which can be developed.

Livermore (2009) describes four components of cultural competence CQ (cultural quotient, CQ):

- motivation (CQ Drive),
- cognition (CQ Knowledge),

- metacognition (CQ Strategy), and
- behavior (CQ Action).

These four components make up the score CQ measured according to the scale, which is similar to the coefficient of human intelligence measurement - IQ.

Motivation (CQ-Drive) is an interest and confidence of a person in effective functioning in cross-cultural conditions. Motivation includes: own interest (pleasure from cultural diversity), extrinsic interest (extraction of benefits from cultural diversity experience), and self-efficacy (sense of confidence in effective functioning in cross-cultural environment).

Cognition (CQ-Knowledge) is knowledge of similarities and differences of cultures. It includes: business (knowledge of economic and legal systems), interpersonal communication (knowledge of values, norms of social interaction and religious beliefs), and social linguistics (knowledge of language rules and rules of non-verbal behavior).

Metacognition (CQ-Strategy) means the experience that a person gets from cross-cultural interaction. It happens when people make conclusions about their own cognitive processes and cognitive processes of others. Metacognition consists of awareness, planning and check. Awareness means knowledge of cultural heritage of a country, planning means the development of a strategy to interact with cultural diversity, and check means the check of assumptions and adjustments of a mental card, when actual experience differs from expectations.

Behavior (CQ-Action) is the opportunity to adapt verbal and non-verbal behavior, to make it relevant in different cultures. It involves the presence of versatile repertoire of behavioral reactions, which are suitable in different situations. Behavior can be conventionally divided into non-verbal - changes in non-verbal behavior (for example, gestures, mimicry), and verbal - changes in verbal behavior (for example, emphasis, tone) (Livermore, 2009).

2. Problem Statement

The problem of cultural diversity and unity, cultural identity and cultural interaction is most relevant in modern society. People are faced with various problems – how to achieve a sense of identity and ‘home’; how to secure land rights or human rights (including a right to be different from the majority and yet not be discriminated against for it). To solve these problems they use the notion of ‘cultural identity’ as a self-conscious formulation with which to represent themselves, to locate themselves and struggle for the end they seek to achieve.

3. Research Questions

According to the definition of a modern Russian culture expert Flier, cultural competence means the degree of socialization and inculturation of an individual in society. These skills give the opportunity to understand freely, use and interpret variably all ordinary (non-specialized) knowledge, and partly specialized, but widely used knowledge. This knowledge make up the total human erudition and are the set of rules, samples, laws, customs, prohibitions, moral norms and other behavior regulations (Flier, 2000).

In the work “Cultural Competence Personality: between Problems Education and National Politics” Flier (2000) distinguished four structural components of cultural competence and the disciplines, which provide its formation.

The first component is the competence towards social norms of institutional interaction and main social, economic, political, and legal institutions. In modern Russia, these rules are studied within such academic educational disciplines as economics, political science, jurisprudence, and social science.

The second component is the competence towards the conventional standards of social and cultural regulation, including traditions, morality, customs, and ceremonies in social and humanitarian knowledge. In educational system such disciplines as philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, art studies, ethics and aesthetics form cultural competence. But they are often underestimated in secondary educational space.

The third component is the knowledge in the field of social prestige – fashion, image, social status and social flows. These are short samples studied at special optional courses. But mostly, all children and students get this kind of knowledge from social networks and TV.

Finally, the fourth component is the competence expressed in the level of language freedom – fluent (oral and written), special language or professional language, as well as in the recognition of political or religious symbols, etc. Philological and historical disciplines are responsible for the formation of this kind of cultural competence (Flier, 2000, p. 153).

Flier also notes that people learn the significant part of cultural competence from the childhood and correct it constantly during in the process of communication (Flier, 2000, p. 153). Throughout the whole life, people fill their cultural field with fairy-tales and cautionary tales for children, lessons of history, literature and other humanitarian subjects at school, travels to different countries. This process can be compared with the content of many religious teachings, which strictly divide correct and wrong behavior, good and evil. So, people can see some correct model of social behavior and relationship with other people.

Due to the fact that in conditions of globalization each segment of cultural space contains cultural variety and polylogue, there is almost daily need in further development of cultural competence.

Thus, the goal of our research is to demonstrate the ideology of cultural competence formation is aimed at the principles of cultural inclusion and proclaims equality of cultural status of all peoples and personalities. It involves the refusal from cultural isolation, cultural exclusivity and promotes inclusion of all people into the political culture defining the development of cultural needs of all people through their creativity. Freedom, cooperation and equality are important guiding principles of cultural competence formation. So, aesthetic and moral tastes and emotional culture play a big role in cultural competence formation. Moreover, cultural diversity and freedom of cultural consumption shall not break social stability, but shall promote its unity.

4. Purpose of the Study

What are the conditions and prospects for cultural competence formation in Russia? A.Y. Flier thinks that sociocultural transformation also very relevant in modern Russia (as cited in Mosolova, 2014). The world events of the XX century - war, genocide, totalitarianism – changed radically the attitude both

to national and to social, religious and other ideologically grounded discord between people in many countries worldwide. Intellectual thought intensified in the search for non-confrontational forms of social and national solidarity and non-violent methods of resolution of social and national conflicts. Zakovorotnaya (2013) notes that the fundamentally important event, which influenced radically both on orientation of social dynamics in general, and on the state of national and cultural sphere in particular, became the information revolution of the second half of the XX century. This revolution resulted in the formation of global information networks, transnational multimedia systems, etc. However, Rodermel (2011) considers that a closed subculture cannot become a national and general social model. But the concept “civility” within the Russian national tradition reduced only to the level of humanitarian erudition, in contrast to the western tradition, where “civility” is, above all, social adequacy and manners, corresponding to the real social status.

Though the content of general education is formed on the basis of combination of many subject areas, in fact, it is about education of the most trivial and, at the same time, the most exotic of all specialties – a full member of society. This complex systematic knowledge and representations, abilities and skills, traditions and values orientations can be named as the system of cultural competence of a personality.

5. Research Methods

As the main research method, we chose the project method. In order to attract attention to relations and coexistence of individual cultural and historical communities, the Center for Gifted Children “Dar” developed and initiated the project “The world in the palm” in 2012 (Centre for Gifted Children "Dar", 2012). The priority directions of the project have become transfer of knowledge of other cultures and formation of cultural identity discourse through the prism of historical parallels of Russia and European countries.

The purpose of the project is theoretical support of the problems of multiculturalism discourse development among modern young people.

The project tasks are the following:

- formation of citizenship and patriotism feelings;
- development of interest in history, culture, Russian language and other European languages;
- development of creative potential of students through studying of new subjects;
- formation of communicative competence of students;
- increasing modern education quality through the use of works of interdisciplinary nature, requiring competence in different areas of human knowledge (history, literature, culture, foreign languages, cultural management, etc.)

One of the project directions is the attraction of attention to intercultural dialogue, and promotion of knowledge of cultural peculiarities of Russia and European countries. The project implementation includes the events aimed at increasing the level of knowledge of history of southern Russian cities and culture of other countries, as well as the interaction of young people with representatives of other cultures and expansion of language practice. To form positive attitude to the world cultural heritage and the

development of creative abilities of young people, competitions were held in cooperation with local cultural centers that supported the project initiative.

Over 1000 students from secondary educational institutions of our city have taken part in the project since 2012. More than 100 students take part in each event. For example, 193 students took part in the online quiz “Italy. Open together!”, which was arranged together with the Center “Dante Alighieri”, and 165 Rostov-on-Don schoolchildren took part in the days of Greece independence (Figure 1). The results of the project implementation were summarized and presented at conferences of different level.

It is worth noting that by developing interest to history, culture, and native language, we allow young people to reveal their creative potential, expand horizons, form moral qualities and develop ethical principles. Cultural competence and conditions for its formation change in accordance with historical transformations. Currently, the need in further cultural competence development is not only preserved, but intensified. This project initiative allows young people to realize the need in life self-determination and self-expression individually, in group and in society. One of the modern education tasks is fostering young generation in spirit of tolerance, friendship, mutual understanding and acceptance of others through acquaintance with culture and life of different peoples, the exchange of knowledge and ideas is the basis of harmonious multicultural personal development.

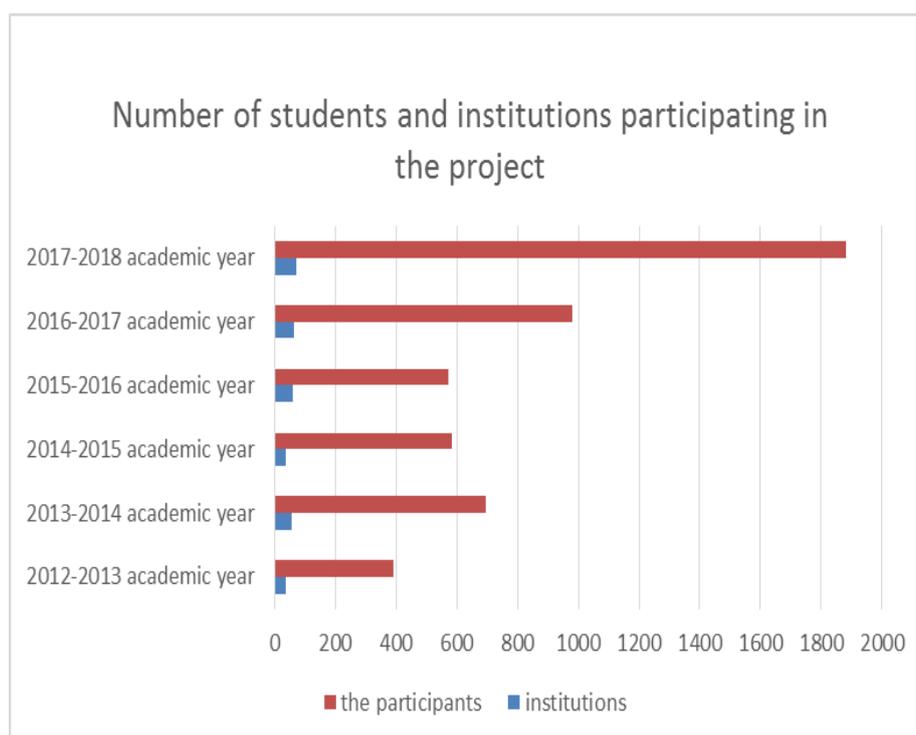


Figure 01. The number of participating institutions and students during the project (source: our own statistics)

6. Findings

The project method that was used by us implies an independent cognitive activity of schoolchildren and students on a given topic or problem. What is important, we attract attention not only to humanitarian subjects, but we are trying to make this project interdisciplinary. The process of

formation of socio-cultural competence is quite time-consuming and complex. Projects in this area have great potential to address the many cultural and social challenges of our time. Thus, the sphere of education, being an integral part of civil society, should initiate and support the creation of projects that regulate tolerance both at the individual and social levels, and at the level of interstate relations. “Creative education” is a prerequisite for the innovation industry. Cultural education is the basis for developing people's ability to work together productively with understanding and respect in teams and global organizations,” notes Austrian researcher Kircher-Kohl (2007, p. 54).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that development and formation of cultural competence among young people allow exercising social and cultural transformation in current Russian society. Understanding of values and generally accepted norms of behavior in different cultural environment will allow young people to become successful representatives of the world community.

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