

WEHSO 2015 - II International Scientific Symposium on Lifelong Wellbeing in the World

## Ethnic tolerance among students

Tatyana V. Vorobyova<sup>a</sup>, Larisa G. Poleshchuk<sup>a\*</sup>

*\*Corresponding author: Larisa G. Poleshchuk, kgoutitpu@rambler.ru, Tel.:89236139382*

*<sup>a</sup>Yurga Institute of Technology, Tomsk Polytechnic University, 26, Leningradskaya st, Yurga, 652055, Russia, e-mail: yitpu@tpu.ru, tel.:7-38451-77767*

### Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.02.40>

The article examines formation of ethnic tolerance among university students. In a multinational state university environment is a zone of intense inter-ethnic contacts. Students are an active part of the society that affects the future of Russia as a multinational state. In universities representatives of various ethnic groups meet for the first time ever, different worldviews and culture systems come into contact. As a result of these contacts, stereotypes of interethnic perception and behavior are consolidated, which many students will carry through their lives. In Yurga Institute of Technology the problem of interethnic relations has arisen since 2008, when students of the Altai Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan were admitted. Thus, in addition to representatives of Tatar, Russian, Armenian, German nationalities, representatives of Kazakh and Altai nationalities have been trained in YTI. Due to extension of ethnic composition, the paper attempts to analyze existing measures on formation of interethnic communication culture in YTI TPU, propose a strategy for further action to the stated problem. The results of the research on ethnic tolerance among students are available.

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**Keywords:** Ethnic tolerance, university environment, culture of interethnic communication.

### Introduction

The Russian Federation is characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity. Here representatives of many nations traditionally live peacefully. However, due to objective and subjective reasons ethnopolitical situation remains difficult accentuated by ethnic conflicts. Armed conflicts, acts of terrorism, hostage-taking, violence, organized crime and frauds are fueling mutual exclusion and malevolence, unusual for friendly peoples. Interethnic relations are often politicized and adapted for mercenary purposes. Socio-economic problems such as unemployment, low standard of living of the majority, neglect teenagers and criminality have a negative impact on the ethno-political situation. High level of migration generates tensions between migrants and local populations have a



destabilizing impact on the ethno-political situation. Factors that promote interdependence, interpenetration of cultures and serve as a stimulus for the development of tolerant thinking is as follows:

1. The development of technologies;
2. Globalization of the economy;
3. Intensive migration
4. Multiculturalism.

The relevance of this study is caused by growth of national consciousness, which, if a weak state ideological base, is often accompanied by increasing tension and confrontation in international relations. Therefore, lately scientists are increasingly paying attention to this issue.

There are well-known studies on this problem by foreign scientists such as W. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, T.W. Adorno, M.Mead. American philosophers and sociologists studied racial problems and the related contradiction; European scientists studied problems of ethnocentrism, national character and ethnic stereotypes. The reasons for this are quite understandable. In the USA, there are still conflicts between representatives of European race and representatives of Negroid, Mongoloid and other races. Europe, for its part, has learned from the experience of fascist regimes with their theories of chauvinism and genocide. Related works of Russian researchers and theorists are widely represented; among them Yu.V.Arutyunyan, Yu.V.Bromley, N.Dzhunusov, L.V.Drobizheva, S.T.Kaltakhchyan, V.I.Kozlov, M.I.Kulichenko, P.I.Kushner, N.N. Cheboksarov, G.V. Shulepov and other should be noted.

Youngsters are one of the major social groups in our society. Young people join the ranks of older generations and begin to participate in social processes. Today's interests, attitudes and values, prevailing among young people, affect the further socio-economic, political and cultural development of society, on the future of the nation itself. In connection with revival of national cultures and restoration of traditions of nations living on the territory of Russia, a question arises: how young people take it.

Higher education students are the most educated and socially active among all young people; therefore participation of students in these processes is quite natural. Students' attitudes toward ethnic development, their understanding and mastering of the process will affect the further course of reconstruction and development of national cultures and ethnic relations. Student environment is a zone of intense inter-ethnic contacts. In universities representatives of various ethnic groups meet for the first time ever, different worldview systems come into contact. As a result of these contacts, stereotypes of interethnic perception and behavior are consolidated, which many students will carry through their lives.

In general, the student's age (18-22 years) is a critical period in the development, strengthening and consolidation of ethnic identity. While studying at the university ethnic identity of a young individual extends his/her conception of the world and strengthens his/her position. Student age is a crisis transition between adolescence and adulthood, when such multi-dimensional and complex processes occur as gaining a new adult identity and relationship to the world (Hasanov,1994). All this increases the responsibility of university education for the future of Russia, for the development of inter-ethnic cooperation. Unfortunately, modern system of education does not guarantee formation of positive ethnic stereotypes. The emergence of a negative perception of a particular ethnic group or awareness

of superiority of any nation is extremely dangerous in the student community; as university graduates being the future intellectual elite, which will generate further Russian policy in the XXI century, can become a proponent of negative stereotypes in interethnic cooperation.

In connection with the above the purpose of the work is to study the culture of international relations among students. The most important tasks are:

1. Identification of problems of ethnic tolerance development among young people.
2. Development of strategies for the ethnic tolerance.

The subject is 18 to 22 year students of Yurga Institute of Technology.

The object is ethnic tolerance of students.

Modern science understands ethnic tolerance as a personal quality and a part of social patterns. It expresses itself in tolerance for different lifestyles, customs, traditions, morals, feelings, opinions and ideas of representatives of other ethnic groups and cultures. Ethnic tolerance manifests itself in various critical situations of interpersonal and intra-personal choice; when usual ethnic patterns and ways of solving problems do not work, and new ways or patterns are in the process of formation. Ethnic tolerance is revealed and, in some sense, formed in the problem-conflict situations of interaction with representatives of different ethnic groups (Shlyagina,2007).]

In the face of challenges posed by modern civilization, development of inter-ethnic tolerance is the most important task that is necessary not only for the development but simply for survival. In our opinion, the system of higher education is obliged to participate in solving this problem more actively.

University as a significant institution of socialization, not only gives a system of knowledge and skills but also has a direct impact on personalities, increasing the level of socio-psychological competence and psychological culture, therefore, the development of tolerance should take a priority position.

Furthermore, as noted by researchers (Ershova,2009), student age is the most important stage in development of ethnic identity; hence at this stage, the impact of ethnic stereotypes and patterns may be the most effective. Formation of culture of interethnic communication is based on the following fundamental principles:

- state of contemporary ethno-political situation in the country;
- principles of the state national policy reflected in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, federal and provincial legislative instruments;
- strict observance of democratic norms and requirements, the priority of civil rights and freedoms;
- mandatory connection of educational and training activities with the practice of inter-ethnic communication, education of humanistic treatment of persons of any nationality;
- systematic and integrated approach to solving the problem of tolerant interethnic communication; coordination of all forces affecting the nature of inter-ethnic communication.

Introduction of elements of multiculturalism into education can contribute to tolerance education.

What is important in solving this problem:

1) students should be taught their own culture; that is an essential requirement for integration into different cultures;

2) students should be taught human rights and learn peacefulness;

- 3) students should have an idea of multiculturalism in Russia and in the world;
- 4) students should be positive about cultural differences that contribute to progress of mankind;
- 5) at the university there would be conditions for integration of students into other cultures;
- 6) students should develop skills of effective interaction with representatives of different cultures;
- 7) students should be educated in the spirit of peace, tolerance and human inter-ethnic communication.

In Yurga Institute of Technology (hereinafter YTI) the problem of interethnic relations has arisen since 2008, when students of the Altai Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan were admitted. Thus, in addition to representatives of Tatar, Russian, Armenian, German nationalities, representatives of Kazakh and Altai nationalities have been trained in YTI. Due to extension of ethnic composition, a strategy of improvement of the interethnic communication culture in YTI should be developed.

To date, the culture of interethnic relations in YTI is being developed; first, through the work of Division of Extracurricular Activities; second, through the educational process; third, through the research work of students.

The Department of Extracurricular activities holds an annual festival of national cultures since 2011. The main purpose of the event is to improve and support tolerance of students. Students of the following nationalities: Altai (Sagal family line, Kergil family line), Armenians, Tatars, Russian, German take part in the festival.

Objectives of the festival are as follows:

- introduction of the ethnic communities in YTI that preserve and evince ethno-cultural traditions of the native people;
- revealing of talented students, making conditions for cultural expressions of students;
- cultural expressions of students through creativity;
- extension of the unique cultural heritage of small ethnic groups.

YTI educational program also provides opportunities to develop a culture of international relations. Subjects such as National History, Philosophia, Law, Cultural Studies and Psychology include educational materials, which promotes awareness of diversity of national cultures and involvement of representatives of different nationalities in the collective history.

National History allows students to get acquainted with the historical facts that reveal the origins of all-Russian unity and solidarity.

Psychology includes lectures about the features of ethnic psychology of different nationalities.

Cultural Studies introduce cultural values and traditions of different nationalities studying in YTI.

Law includes regulations that reflect the main provisions of national public policy.

One of the key measures in the education of ethnic tolerance can become a study ethnopsychology as a part of educational programs for nonhumanities students. This subject is able to demonstrate and explain the specifics of ethnic differences. Here attention must be paid not only to theoretical trainings, but also practical contacts between members of different ethnic groups, at the interstate and at the regional levels, where ethnic differences are often considerable.

Thus, a multidisciplinary approach contributes to development of a general idea on national-cultural diversity of Russia, especially ethnic psychology, common historical destiny and, thus, fosters a culture of interethnic communication.

Researches of YTI students also contribute to the culture of inter-ethnic communication through participation in conferences, presentations on the cultural characteristics of people, cultural dialogue, interethnic tolerance, national policy of Russia.

In this sense, it is significant that YTI students participate in the annual All-Russian open competition of student research papers "Dialogue of Cultures" (Kemerovo State University of Culture and Arts, Kemerovo). Students, who are involved in this kind of research work, have the opportunity to investigate facts of history and culture of ethnic groups, which they represent.

Patriotic education also develops a culture of interethnic communication, as it has integrating properties. In this context the annual All-Russian military-historic conference with international participation should be noted, which is held by the staff of the Department of Humanities and Foreign Languages.

In our opinion, the work aimed at the development of ethnic tolerance in the university, should include all subjects of the educational process and all components of the educational environment (Hasanov,1997).

We will consider specific goals and objectives of such work through three aspects: educational, diagnostic and remedial developmental.

#### **Education:**

- providing information on tolerance and intolerance; their manifestations in interethnic interaction;
- development of ideas about origin and consolidation of ethnic stereotypes and race and ethnicity discrimination in public consciousness;
- training skills for recognition ethnic stereotypes, ethnocentrism and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and race in different spheres of social life;
- development of adequate ideas about different cultures and psychological characteristics of their representatives.

#### **Diagnosis:**

- awareness of one's own ethnic stereotypes and their impact on various spheres of life;
- definition of the average level of tolerance of certain groups of students.
- development of a positive ethnic identity.

#### **Correction, psychological assistance and development:**

- awareness of one's role in translation and consolidation of ethnic stereotypes and various forms of racial discrimination
- abreaction from negative feelings associated with the experience of racial discrimination;
- development of a positive ethnic identity.

These goals and objectives can be realized through introduction of theoretical information on the importance of tolerance in modern society into programs of general education courses, and through practical special trainings.

### **The research of culture of international relations among students**

The author suggested that there is ethnic tolerance among YTI students. To verify the hypothesis, the research was carried out as follows:

1. Development of research program.
2. Questionnaire surveys of students.
3. Data processing and analysis; conclusions.

25 YTI students (13 young men and 12 girls), aged 18 to 22 years were surveyed. Selection of respondents was random, participation was voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire included 20 questions related to the culture of international relations among students. Representatives from six nationalities: Russian, Altai, Germans, Kazakhs, Armenians and Tatars took part in the research.

#### **Data Analysis revealed:**

(on national cultures)

44% of respondents know their culture;

54% - support preservation of national cultures;

16% - are familiar with cultures of other nationalities of Kemerovo region;

80% - want to know more about other cultures;

8% - are not interested in other cultures.

Thus, most students are familiar with the culture their people and believe that it is necessary to preserve national cultures. Students know little about other cultures, but would like to know more.

(on faiths and rituals)

36% of respondents are Orthodox;

32% - Muslims;

20% - atheists;

12% believe in the existence of Supreme Powers, but do not profess any religion.

However, only half of the students, who consider themselves believers, observe religious rituals.

(on interethnic communication)

72% of students are willing to communicate with people of other ethnicity;

52% do not attach importance to the ethnicity;

24% take into account ethnic peculiarities when communicating;

20% of students are positive about inter-ethnic marriages;

36% of respondents said that their families disapprove intermarriages;

68% have never experienced discrimination based on ethnicity;

32% of students appraise inter-ethnic relations in YTI as good;

52% - appraise it as normal.

44% of students responded to the question "what should be done to improve inter-ethnic relations among students?" that more information is needed about the culture and customs of other nations.

## Conclusions

Most of the students:

1) are familiar with the national culture and believe that it is necessary to preserve it; students know little about cultures of other nations, but would like to know more;

2) consider themselves believers, but only 50% observe religious rites;

3) are positive about people of other ethnic groups, while the students are more positive towards people of other ethnic groups than their families;

4) do not take into account national peculiarities during intercommunication;

5) disapprove intermarriages;

6) have never experienced discrimination based on ethnicity;

7) appraise inter-ethnic relations in YTI as good.

Analysis of the responses on interpersonal interaction showed that the majority of students and their families were positive about people of other nations.

It is interesting that students are more positive to representatives of other ethnic groups than their families. Obviously there is a trend to increasing of ethnic tolerance among young people.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the anonymous referees for their constructive and useful comments on the paper.

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