

Challenges to Teachers' Education in the Context of Globalization and Integration: Experience of Multicultural Tatarstan Republic

Farida Sh. Mukhametzyanova^a & Tatjana M. Tregubova^{b*}

* Corresponding author: Tatjana M. Tregubova, tmtreg@mail.ru

^aInstitute of Pedagogue, Psychology and Social problems, 12 Isaev St., Kazan, Russia, densy_07@mail.ru,
+7(987)2901889

^bInstitute of Pedagogue, Psychology and Social problems, 12 Isaev St., Kazan, Russia, tmtreg@mail.ru,
+7(987)2902472

Abstract

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This challenging research paper is an effort to trace the changes and the role of the tolerance and multiculturalism in the varied, endlessly complex teachers' training education in a modern Russian university; and to present the challenges that it faces in the context of globalization and international integration in the name of tolerance and multiculturalism.

The purpose of our paper is to present the Tatarstan Republic's experience in this sphere, and to create a body of knowledge for follow-on research. Indeed the process of world globalization means the formation of unified multicultural educational and research area. That's why it's necessary to develop both the teaching and learning strategies, and to include authentic materials in the teachers' university curriculum.

The authors stress the importance of the international educational experience research in the sphere of the organization of teachers' education, and to investigate the opportunities of its use at the Russian universities.

The paper also deals with the issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the teachers' training process that is very important and valuable for multicultural societies, such as the Tatarstan Republic with the population, consisting of more than 65 nationalities, and having 2 state languages: Russian and Tatar. The population of Russia, in general, comprises more than 100 nationalities, ethnic and cultural groups. Special attention is paid to the role of joint international educational projects in teachers' education.

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I. Main text

1.1. Introduction

By this paper, we present the Tatarstan Republic's experience in reforming some aspects of the



teachers' education and to explore massive changes that are taking place in Russian education system, in general, in the context of globalization and integration processes. So, the data were collected through the analysis and study of materials from Russian and international books, research journals, and professional education publications as well as from the authors' participation in numerous seminars, conferences and meetings with Russian and international experts, so as to determine: "What was the impact of globalization and integration on teachers' education in Russia and Russian students' lives?"

1.2. Problem statement

The present modernization of the Teachers' Education in Russia has its precedent in its own past, during the period immediately following the October Revolution in 1917 (Orlov, A.A., 2002). The new Soviet educational authorities advocated the introduction of a new type of school - the unified labor school. That school was to be founded upon such principles as child-centered and humanistic education, collaboration and cooperation between students and teachers, content-based traditions of the tsarist school system. However, not enough attention was given to the task of preparing teachers to carry out the democratic reforms and to "humanize" the social and cultural environment.

So, the lesson to be learned from the 1920s: the teacher-education reform should come before general democratic educational reforms (Orlov, 2002).

With the end of this period of the closed Soviet society, during which all relevant information was under tight state control, the transition to an open Russian society, the problem of teachers' education reforms became very actual. So today one has to realize that modern Russia is experiencing the greatest challenge since the USSR break-up in 1991. Due to the effect of free market economy, of globalization and integration processes, many social-economic reforms have been started, and the dialectics of social-cultural development in this country sooner or later had to bring to life a fundamentally new content and priorities in the teachers' education.

1.3. Multiculturalism and tolerance formation in teachers' education

Another important aspect, dealing with the teachers' education reform concerns the issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the educational establishments that is very important and valuable for multicultural societies, such as the Tatarstan Republic with the population, consisting of more than 65 nationalities, and having 2 state languages: Russian and Tatar; the population of Russia, in general, comprises more than 100 nationalities, and ethnic groups. So, the problem of effective multicultural non-conflict contacts between students and teachers as well as the formation of tolerant personality is urgent and significant for research and implementation.

In spite of the fact, that everyone in Russia is exposed to the same educational system, the same political and economic systems, and perhaps most importantly, the same mass media, still his/her background, especially family traditions, lifestyle, and stereotypes influence the person's behavior and actions.

On the one hand, the diversity of students requires different kinds of pedagogical approaches and technologies of educational assistance (Barr R.D., 2007). On the other hand, "multicultural" students

demand additional efforts from professors/teaching staff towards their smooth adjustment, especially within the system of teachers' education.

So, in general, young Russian generation (beginning with the secondary school pupils) should be adapted to new multicultural classroom norms, and the experience of being a newcomer and different accounts for some adjustment problems. No doubts, they need teaching and counseling. Hence there should be strict selection of candidates of teachers as the tutors, because the modern professional teaching sphere needs tolerant and high-quality professionals.

To achieve this phenomenon, teaching staff must work upon creating self-discipline and developing professional and socio-cultural competence. Whether it is possible to achieve multi-cultural education depends mostly on a teacher, that's why it is obligatory for a teacher to develop his/herself as a tolerant personality, that means "thinking globally in a tolerant manner" (A Call for Change in Teacher Education. Nation Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, 2007). Behaving tolerantly brings great results to the process of teaching and learning. But the people who have awareness and have broad vision know that without constructive, positive and teachers' ethical education and without justice it is not possible (Melnick S.L., 2010).

1.4. The international projects' role in Teachers' education reforms

As Russian educational institutions become more diverse due to the Bologna process and also participate in the international labor of educational services, theorists and teachers' trainers often recommend multicultural education as a solution to working successfully in these schools (in traditional and innovative informal educational establishments). Multicultural education is a response to multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, to the challenges of our global time, and one of the most important pedagogical issues facing world civilization.

Our Institute, that is the Kazan branch of Russian Academy of Education (former USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences) - the supreme scientific and coordinating body for research in socio-educational field and educational technology in Russian Federation, - has been working for about 3 years at the fulfillment of the TEMPUS Project "ALLMEET" - "Actions of Lifelong Learning addressing Multicultural Education and Tolerance in Russia" (www.allmeet.org). Within the project, we organized the multicultural training and special courses for students- future teachers at the Academy of Social Education (ASE) in Kazan. We also involved future teachers in the extra-school activities, such as special academy parties and debates: "Be tolerant and you avoid conflicts", "The world is so bright and multicolored!", "Multicultural Tatarstan", "Old friends and old wine are best", "How to be tolerant", "Travelling is the best way to learn the world", etc.

The general idea of all these activities was to realize how tolerant our students are, how to be tolerant in the multicultural world, and how to make life more interesting and bright. The most important result of all this activity was that the majority of students have understood "tolerance" as understanding other people and patience.

Besides we assume that educational travelling is also one of the best ways to learn and to investigate the global world. The Russian famous educator Konstantin Ushinskiy in the XIX-th century said that any education should be finished with *a journey*. During the winter and summer vacations, students are

“provided a bridge for cross-cultural exchange”, which opened a window into the richness of the own country, the countries of NIS as well as European Union’s different cultural traditions with a series of entertaining and intellectual activities.

Within the ALLMEET project, we also have established a Multicultural Center that now provides a lot of activities and opportunities for students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff, such as:

- To examine and make comparative multi country analysis of training programs and evaluate how in the training process students are socialized in the values, norms and beliefs of the multicultural world;
- To design, develop, and implement new effective programs that educate and develop an excellent and diverse teachers’ body to organize the intercultural education and tolerance formation;
- To link US and European education and social programs with the Russian regional and state ones in a spirit of collaboration, and to initiate and carry out significant creative joint researches;
- To find the ways and conditions under which the US and EU models and practice may be adapted and used in Russia to meet the challenges for modern Russian education restructuring;
- To find international and Russian literature and research resources that deal with the issues of diversity, tolerance and ethnicity in education and explain the role of teachers in overcoming all types of discrimination; study them and implement;
- Scientific forecasts of educational innovative processes in Russia;
- To publish the scientific and education results;
- To monitor the international professional education experience implementation and its development in Russia with a special focus on the Volga-river federal district.

2. Research findings

We conducted a survey of 25 ASE teachers in the questionnaire "Evaluation of the level of tolerance" to measure the level of their tolerance. The questionnaire for evaluating the entrance and the exit level of tolerance of the people attending the courses offered is based on a set of indicators developed within The ACCEPT PLURALISM Project, supported by European Commission, Seventh Framework Programme in 2013. The ALLMEET project adopts the suggested indicators to evaluate the tolerance level of ALLMEET courses attendees. To measure the level of tolerance/intolerance, we apply the definition of tolerance elaborated within the ALLMEET project, which might be defined as “the ability, or willingness, to accept feelings, habits, beliefs, opinions, and behaviours different from the own, and which one may dislike or disagree with” (ALLMEET Project Intercultural Glossary, 2014). An important pillar in this study served as their own teaching experience; interviews with teachers; exchange of experience in the course of scientific workshops, scientific and methodological conferences, forums, etc.

At that stage the work was conducted in different directions:

- a) Classifying the difficulties which the teachers face in practice (studying theoretical materials and experimental data).

The causes (reasons) of these problems are very diverse: they are both subjective and objective. They can be the difficulties of study requiring making significant efforts to study the material, and many concepts of abstraction, imperfection of tolerance of the teachers, lack of attention of these teachers to this phenomenon related to the interaction of the different group of education participants, and etc. With the support of ALLMEET project and according to the steering document, a teacher in return is supposed to embody the whole indicated theoretical material but also come to deep understanding of the points of the subject within the allotted time.

b). Analysis of teachers' tolerance level.

The test involved 25 teachers with teaching experience from 2 to 42 years; 18% respondents were teachers in human and social science; 64% respondents were teachers in professional subjects, and 18 % - in nature sciences. The age of the respondents was 26-65 years old, 16 % - male, and 84 % - female. They had to answer 12 questions. The maximum possible amount was 70 scores. However, the real average rating was 34 (the min. rating is 21 (49%) and max. - 42 (81%)).

We distributed awareness level as follows:

- Low level – 60 % and lower
- Middle level – 60- 75 %
- High level – 75- 100 %.

Before the beginning of our special training at the Center ALLMEET, only 16% of teachers was at the high level of tolerance, at the middle level - 27% (7 persons), low – 57 % (14 persons).

If we analyze the results of the survey, we can uncover a tendency of receiving high scores for the answers on politics, economics, and state, and the low scores are on the teachers' work themselves, thus, as the teachers consider, the state and society are obliged to solve the problems of migrants, in this case the most of problems can be avoided. This research shows initially that most teachers had low level of tolerance maturity.

The second stage of research (exploration phase) was directed to reach the main purpose of this work, thus to develop an effective instruction technique and academic content.

During this work, the academic content was carefully selected, the practical work system was developed, the test bank was formed, all the practical materials proposed by the participants of the project were approved, the technology on tolerance formation was moderated, the purpose of which was to develop the knowledge and skills of tolerant students. A set of appropriate teaching materials was developed and implemented.

The teachers attended the qualification upgrading courses, besides they participated in all research and practice seminars conducted by the members of the project ALLMEET.

The purpose of the re-survey was to test the efficiency of materials and technologies developed and implemented by the members of the Project consortium into the qualification upgrading courses. The results of the pilot survey allowed identifying the general tendency and personal positive improvements. As a proof of the positive tendency confidence, we assessed the level of the teachers tolerance maturity, the degree of maturity was on the basis of the following indicators:

1. Intolerance/ ignorance or denying;
2. Passive tolerance;

3. Active tolerance.

Quantitative estimation showed: 45% teachers reached the high level of tolerance, 38% - the middle, and 17 % remained on the low one. The visual analysis suggests a strong tendency of the growth of better understanding of the tolerance phenomenon and possible approaches to it. Besides:

1. The teachers, having attended the courses under the International educational platform within the project of ALLMEET, featured mostly the middle and high level of tolerance (83% respondents) which is characterized by the teachers' tolerance to the culture, ethnic, and religious differences, an active recognition of social and economic needs of ethno-cultural minority and migrants. Teachers recognize the necessity of introducing special political, social and economic measures, which may concern different fields of a public life, and understanding that their actions should have a nature of tolerance.

2. The research of the teachers' survey with the low level of intolerance showed that intolerant features concerned the answers to social and economical needs of ethno-cultural minority and migrants. Hence we can notice the rejection of these groups from the involvement into the different points of social, economical and political life of a society.

3. Correlations have been found between the level of tolerance / intolerance of the teacher and his (her) teaching experience. Thus, the low level of tolerance and a low level of intolerance are observed in teachers with little pedagogical experience (from 2 to 8 years). This fact is likely to explain the lack of experience in the early years at work, thus focusing mostly on job performance but not on interaction with the students. The tolerance level rises to the high level, when the teachers have been conducting their classes for 10-20 years, when specialists have gotten interested in efficiency of interaction with the students. However, if we speak about the teachers with work experience longer than 30 years, we can notice, on the one hand, these teachers often have professional fatigue, burnout relating to work routine, and on the other hand, conventional wisdom solves any difficulties in teaching, including tolerance.

The research results brought us to the conclusion: tolerance as a value focus on a professional culture of a teacher is necessary to develop, stimulate and correct, since just teachers give a general vector to bring up youth and society in general. It is necessary to work on tolerance level development of teachers intentionally and consistently.

These results suggest: raising the level of tolerance is provided by teachers in the process of training courses, in the process of participating in various events on the issues, based on a specially developed program, which includes the following necessary components:

- A section devoted to the phenomenon of tolerance; and a holistic view of the processes of ethnic, ethno genesis of peoples, ethnic and cultural features of the peoples living in the Russian Federation, in particular, in the Republic of Tatarstan;
- The inclusion in the compulsory practical component of the tolerance formation; training teachers of educational technology to promote tolerance in interethnic relations; training methods, procedures and techniques for Ethnic Studies in a multicultural educational space;
- In educational institutions, the organization of training courses, seminars, and master-classes with experts for the target groups of teachers;

- Self-education of tolerance formation, which is manifested in the work of the teachers themselves: self-examination, reflection, rejection of prejudices, stereotypes, the use of tolerant practices of interaction in the educational process, etc.
- Training of teachers to conduct professional activities, taking into account the specifics of the ethno-cultural regions and territories of Russia and Tatarstan.

2.1. Some conceptual ideas in Teachers' education reforms

According to all Russian Federal standards (the III-d edition), the bachelor key competencies have already been defined; and among them are professional and general cultural ones. Considering that intercultural competence assumes skills of effective interaction in society, we consider necessary to include ability to warn, solve and resolve conflict situations which can arise at communication with other people in the content of this concept. As elements of social competence structure we consider:

- 1) Communicative abilities which assume readiness for communication, ability to understand and accept other point of view, ability to use means of communication, and also skills according to the prevention and a resolution of conflicts;
- 2) Social adaptation which is connected with acceptance of the social role, ability to work according to the accepted role, readiness for the solution of social problems;
- 3) Confidence in communication process, ability to critical analysis of the actions and acts, and also readiness for self-improvement.

Some degree of tolerance is necessary in any civilized society, but we understand, that it is not realistic to believe that all people can achieve it completely on every issue. It goes against human nature or the instinctive impulse of a person to pull away from people or things that are different or unknown. Putting up with differences is a learned attribute, a virtue that requires honest effort on the part of every person. It takes time to develop, and it also takes commitment (Analyzing Personal Teaching Metaphors in Pre-service Teacher Education, 2014).

So, we would stress again the important conceptual idea on which the teachers' education reforms are based: investigation and practice of the international teachers' education experience, and first of all, the European one, as Russia is a member of "Bologna Club". At the same time it is well known that the attitude towards the international experience is ambivalent. On the one hand, there is a tendency to believe that abroad all possible means to solve educational problems have been already found out, and there is no need to look for something new. This tendency manifests itself in education and deals with the appearance of many western-styled schools, like community colleges, lyceums, and so on. On the other hand, there exists the opinion that Russian educators don't have to study foreign experience because our problems are specific, and the American or European experience won't help us. The well-known joke goes that every country prefers to make its own mistakes in the area of education.

No doubt, both of these positions are polar. The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

3. Conclusion

In order to secure development of modern reforms in the system of teachers' education, it is necessary to radically change the students and teachers' attitude towards them. This change may be

possible when the social and economical situations of the main part of the population in Russia have stabilized, and political situation will be approved. Then it will be possible to turn young people's conscience towards the intercultural and educational problems. It may be necessary to carry out special propaganda activities in a persuasive form that will attract people's attention towards the necessity of lifelong learning and multicultural education, towards tolerance formation of people in Russia and Tatarstan Republic.

We do hope through raising tolerance and multicultural awareness we will contribute to solving the problem and help people living in Russia avoid any clashes or serious conflicts caused by xenophobia, extremism, Nazism. As Helen Keller said "the highest result of education is tolerance". By learning more about others we begin to realize that being tolerant is not about compromising our own beliefs, but rather, it's about condemning the oppression or persecution of other's beliefs. The role of teachers in this process is of paramount importance.

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