

**EEIA-2017**  
**2017 International conference**  
**"Education Environment for the Information Age"**

**METHODOLOGY OF FOREIGN PEDAGOGICAL THOUGHTS'  
UNDERSTANDING IN THEORY-ORIENTED TEACHER  
TRAINING**

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*Abstract*

The article discusses the peculiarities of foreign pedagogical theory-enriched experience competent study. The authors of the article try to reveal the main attributes of the methodological analysis of the theoretical text in a comparative education study on the example of description of the ways of understanding the basic features of foreign learning theories. The authors argue on the importance of an understanding of scientific terms' meanings in the foreign pedagogical articles, explaining a structure of pedagogical knowledge, highlighting the base that forms the learning theories, determining basic values, main goals and goals of the foreign education systems. They approve the importance of interpreting the theories when somebody wants to use the pedagogical ideas developed by foreign theorists. They write on the importance of understanding the foreign ideas in analysing the possibility of transferring the theories from one country to another. They are sure that correctness of transferring foreign experience can occur because of the differences in thinking styles of students, teachers and researchers. The authors assure that the main principles of foreign theories studying, made in this article, could minimise the distortion of foreign thought and avoid the wrong decisions when the ideas of the foreign theories are transferred to other pedagogical theories. Expressing the thoughts on the methodology of understanding of foreign pedagogical theories the authors of the article rely on the ideas of foreign theorists.

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**Keywords:** Determining basic values, understanding the foreign ideas, the main principles, the distortion of foreign thought, foreign pedagogical theories.



## 1. Introduction

The pedagogy, like any other science, cannot be developed in isolation from foreign ideas. The study of international experience in all fields of knowledge has always been one of Russian science development engines. The interpretation of research results in natural sciences obtained in other countries does not require the consideration of it in the frames of thinking types, values, socio-cultural conditions, political order and economic feasibility. In the social sciences, these aspects are of particular attention.

It is very important to understand a foreign article scientific language, a structure of pedagogical knowledge, a base that forms education and learning theories, basic values, main goals and objectives of foreign education systems in order to analyse the feasibility of transferring experience. We need to analyse the foreign data from the point of view of the differences in the types of students, teachers and researchers thinking styles when somebody is going to study the ideas, concepts and theories presented in the foreign pedagogical research. This principle of the foreign experience study can help to minimise distortions of foreign ideas, avoid illegal decisions when transferring it to other education systems. This method contributes to making the right decision on foreign data assessment.

Let's see how this principle is used in the example of western learning and moral education theories studying.

To understand the theory means to understand the system of views presented in it.

The basic paradigms in this paper have been allocated as a result of analysis, synthesis and comparison of scientific papers devoted to the description of western learning and moral education theories. The contemporary western theories are mainly based on behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, humanism and design-based.

The main behaviourist theories: "Classical Conditioning" (Pavlov), "Operant Conditioning" (Skinner), "Social Learning Theory" (Bandura) and others.

Cognitivist theories: "The Theory of Assimilation" (Ausubel), "Attribution Theory" (Weiner), "Cognitive Load Theory" (Sweller), "Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning" (Mayer), "Elaboration Theory" (Reigeluth), "Gestalt psychology" (Tolman), "Mental Models and Cognitive change" (Johnson-Laird), "Stage Theory of Cognitive Development" (Piaget), "Multiple Intelligences Theory" (Gardner), "Expertise Theory" (Ericsson, Gladwell), "Information Processing Theory", "Situating Cognition" (Brown, Collins and Duguid) and others.

The leading Constructivist theories: "Cognitive Apprenticeship" (M. Collins and al.), "Communities of Practice" (Lave and Wenger), "Discovery Learning" (Bruner.), "Social Development Theory" (Vygotsky), "Multiliteracies" (new Landon Group) "Cognitive Dissonance" and "Situating Learning" (Lave) and others.

Motivation and Humanist theories: "Motivational design" (J. Keller, "emotional intelligence" (Goleman D.), "experiential learning" (Kolb), "hierarchy of needs" (Maslow), "The theory of self-determination" (Deci and Ryan).

Identity Theories: "Stages of Development" (Erikson), "Identity Status Theory" (Marcia), "Mindset: Fixed vs. Growth Mindset" (Dweck), "Social Identity Theory" (Taifell, Turner) and others.

Design theories: "ADDIE Model of Instruction Designs", "ARCS Model of Motivational Design" (Keller), "Elaboration Theory" (Reigeluth).

Meta-theory: "Activity Theory" (Leontiev, Luria, Engstrom), "Actor-Network Theory" (Latour, Kallou, "A Taxonomy of objectives" (Bloom), "Distributed Cognition" (Hutchins).

The emergence of new information technologies contribute to the development of such theories as "E-Learning Theory (Mayer, Sweller, Moreno)"; "Gamification in Education"; "Online Collaborative Learning " (Harasim); "Cooperative learning"; "Dopamine, Games and Motivation" and others.

The present distribution of the main learning theories in paradigms is just one of many cluster distributions. There are other bases on which they are classified in other paradigms (Ivanova, 2016).

## **2. Research Questions**

The authors pose question upon the importance to understand scientific terms' meanings in the foreign pedagogical articles devoted to the learning theories, determining basic values and main goals of the foreign education systems.

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to specify the main features of the methodological analysis of the theoretical text in a comparative education study on the example of understanding the bases of foreign learning theories.

## **4. Research Methods**

The following research methods have been used: analysis, generalisation, comparison, interpretation, systematization.

## **5. Findings**

Comparative analysis of the pedagogical theories showed that contemporary theories of learning and education in the western world are based on the data of different sciences, both natural and social. The construction of theories in western countries is rigidly hierarchical: from methodology and ideas of philosophy, psychology, trends in sociology to the development of learning theories.

In contemporary western pedagogy, there is no any common understanding of the term "theory of education" either internationally nor nationally.

In some western countries, the term is non-existent, for example, in Finland. In Finland, researchers use a term "theory of upbringing". In the US the term "theory of education" in some papers is identified as a system of education, in others, it means "the theory of upbringing". An analysis of numerous interpretations of the term in most western countries papers has shown that in general, it refers to a document where the driving purpose and the main directions of education development at a particular time are described.

In most Western countries the science education literature do not always show a difference between the terms that indicate the theory of education and philosophy of education. In American science education literature, we can see opposite points of view on what is attributed to a theory of education, and

philosophy of education. Some theorists believe that a theory of education should include ideas on the directions of education development and philosophical views on education. Others believe that a theory of education should be developed solely on the results of empirical studies. They are sure that philosophy of education means arguments, which are not supported by the empirical data (Button, 2015). In Germany, a theory of education and philosophy of education are not shared (Danner, 1994). Philosophical and conceptual pedagogy in Germany exclusively relies on the achievements of applied philosophy (Hahn, 1998). In the UK it is not still decided what theory of education means. Some scientists refer it to the application area of theoretical knowledge about people, others - to the philosophy of education.

The development of the theory of education in the Western pedagogy is conducted within the framework of a multidisciplinary approach. In the US, the development of a contemporary theory of education is carried out mainly in the discourse of sociologists and educators (Nock, 2007). The Unions of economists and educators, political theorists and teachers do not take a serious part in the discussions on the theory of education. In Germany, by contrast, there are a variety of approaches to the development of the theory of education nowadays. This situation is explained by the multipolarity of epistemology and methodology of contemporary science in the country as a whole. In the UK, special attention in the development of the theory of education is given to the problems of practical realisation of the theoretical tenets of liberalism.

Theories of education rethinking in Western countries is carried out within the framework of different theoretical and methodological grounds. In the US, it is conducted on the basis of functionalism, Conflict Theory and symbolic interactionism. In Germany, the main theoretical reference points are anthropologist and technocratism. In the UK, education theory is based on the neo-liberal model and the social market model (Alexander, 2015). In most countries of the Baltic education theory of education, today is modified within educology.

There is no unity among theorists of different countries in the understanding of such definitions as "theory of learning" and "theory of upbringing".

A distinctive feature of contemporary American, Canadian, Australian and British education is that the theorists of these countries do not use a term "didactics", instead, they use a term "theories of learning". In English-speaking countries, the researchers do not use a term "theory of upbringing" in the broad sense of its understanding in Russia for an example (as moral, religious, civic and multicultural education together). In English-speaking countries, such theories are represented separately, as "Moral education", "Character education", "Religious education", "Civic education", "Multicultural education" and models of education. The theory of these different types of education is usually taken from other areas of knowledge, such as philosophy, ethics, religion, political science, law. In Germany, however, a term "didactics" is actively used. It has many interpretations in this country. In some cases, it incorporates two concepts: a "theory of learning" and a "theory of moral education". The most typical German interpretations of the concept of "didactics" includes such as: "science of learning", "theory of the education content", "science of behaviour change," "curriculum science". It is not easy to isolate learning and moral education components in many German theories of learning, as "learning" and "moral education" often go hand in hand. Some German theorists a term "theory of learning" understands as a metascience. It should be noted the fact that now in Germany the researchers more often use terms "culturalisation", "personalization" and "socialisation", that clarify and enhance the understanding of the

process of education, instead of a term "moral education". The Finnish pedagogical science has all three terms: "didactics", "theory of learning" and "theory of moral education".

In the study of theories, it is necessary to understand which values they broadcast. The contemporary theories in Western countries focus on the formation of different values. English-language theories of moral, civil and multicultural education orient today to the determination of social values. For example, when making a choice of social values American researchers often refer to the works of the philosopher John. Rawls ("Theory of Justice"), psychologist Kohlberg ("Theory of Moral Development"), psychologist Rokeach ("The Nature of Human Values") and political scientist Wildavsky ("Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation"). In the UK, a special focus is made on liberal values. In today's German theories of moral education, the dominating goal is environmental education. The greatest attention Finns are paid to the development of economic consciousness. Western theories as a whole are characterised by methodological and theoretical orientations (the basic directions in which they are evolved and diverged). For example, moral and civic education' goals in the US are mainly based on the ideas of "Theory of Generations" and "Man and Society in an Age of reconstruction" by the sociologist K. Mannheim and on works of the political scientist Westheimer.

Theories of learning are based on methodological and theoretical guidelines of other sciences

In English-speaking countries, as well as in France, Italy, Sweden the basic scientific directions of the contemporary theories of learning are usually cognitivism and constructivism. In the US, there are also theories based on behaviourism. These theories are addressed to children with disabilities and special need. In Germany, special attention is paid to structuralism. In the UK the development of theories is grounded on "Theory of liberalism." It is based on an ideal humanistic vision of human and focused on the personal and social development of people. The main theoretical areas, which determine the development of Finnish theories of learning, include humanistic trends in philosophy.

The need to consider foreign pedagogical works interdisciplinary is noted by Steiner-Khamsi. She argues that each educational system and its pedagogical provision are culturally appropriate to the society in which they develop (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016).

Theorists around the world have been trying to understand the nature of learning, development and upbringing of students and create international theories. The number of theories is growing with each passing decade, but none of them still can not claim to be canonical, covering all aspects of education, explaining the nature of discipleship in all countries of the world.

The researchers around the world are trying to explain how people learn, first of all, in their own country. Theories of learning of different cultures are built on the basis of scientific guidelines and hypotheses, which have a history of national countries development peculiarities. In the study of foreign experience, we should understand that theories of learning are developed in the context of different educational cultures, world outlooks and values.

To understand a foreign theory means to have a clear idea of what it tries to change in the process of learning.

To describe a foreign theory means to explain the ideas of the foreign theorists concerning the main changes in the process of learning in the specific culture, in the style of learning of the national system of education, not in the nature of education as a whole.

The main changes that have occurred in the western theories of learning for the past 100 years, linked to changes in the understanding of what is the main goal of the learning process. In the period of development of behaviourism it was thought that the process of learning contributed to changes in the behaviour of students. In cognitivism, the process of learning is directed to the development of thinking. Constructivism pays great attention to the peculiarities of the personal nature of student learning process in the course of his/ her participation in group activities.

Theories of learning differ in the understanding of aspects that cause the changes in students' knowledge, a level of their ability to demonstrate the skills of emotional intelligence and the role of participation in joint with other students learning activities. At the end of XX - beginning of XXI centuries, the western theorists began to focus on neuroscience knowledge. The new stage in the development of pedagogy, based on methods of natural science approach, could be attributed to the period of receipt of the universal scientific knowledge of social sciences, and to the data, which could explain the mechanisms of students learning in all countries of the world. However, it turns out that this method is not universal on the civilisation scale. The peculiarities of a student brain structure, according to scientific works around the world, depending on the culture in which he or she grew up. The contemporary neuro-scientific research suggests that the style of student' thinking is a hierarchical network system. It can be described in general terms only in the situation when people are learned in one particular culture, speak the same language and have a typical style of thinking. Nisbett, Choi, Norenzayan and others argue that the particular style of students, teachers, researchers' thinking are formed under conditions of national culture, education, social environment, a language of communication, and other diverse factors (Nisbett et al., 2011). Hence the group styles are very different from each other, from culture to culture. Accordingly, when we study western learning theories we should remember that they are addressed primarily to the style of thinking of their students, that they develop the characteristics of thinking that are inherent to their culture.

The study of western theories of learning includes the understanding of how the concrete theory explains a term "knowledge".

For a long time, this term (knowledge) considered as something passed down from generation to generation, more or less intact from one person to another. Since the mid-twentieth century, knowledge has become interpreted as an understanding of the studied material. Today in the western theories of learning knowledge is defined as something that the concrete student constructs himself (Glaserfeld, 2009); it is issued in the form of a group knowledge within the particular culture or discipline. According to the ideology of constructivism, knowledge is built in the process of obtaining it in the process of a joint venture. This kind of knowledge corresponds to the conditions in which students live (Baker, 2012). Since each student designs his understanding of everything himself/ herself, the knowledge he/ she acquires is unique (Stef, Gael, 1995). The outstanding contemporary researcher Robinson argues that today knowledge should be given to students only in the way that contributes to the development of their creative abilities (Robinson, Aronica, 2016).

## 6. Discussion

An important aspect of understanding of Western theories of learning and education is the knowledge of how western scientists explain the processes of students' development in the conditions of learning and upbringing.

The analysis of the scientific and pedagogical sources shows that the development of the western theories of learning and education involves the physical, linguistic, emotional, moral and cognitive formation of the student. All aspects of the students' development of these theories are considered in the context of a transdisciplinary understanding of the term by Piaget (1972). Western theories of development are based on the data of other sciences, such as biology, physiology, genetics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychology, ecology, linguistics, etiology, neuroscience and others. A variety of data that is used in the study of students' development processes in the situation of learning and education, is due to the fact that each research is based on any particular idea of development, which can be substantiated by data of some specific areas of expertise. Today, among the theories of development, as well as among the theories of learning and education, there is no any single theory that can deal with the totality of the scientific evidence of such a complex phenomenon, as the process of development. Since a theory is based on the data of different sciences, all theories of development should be considered in the context of their dominant traits and accordingly allocate the dominant transdisciplinary idea. According to the basic disciplinary grounds, we should make available biological, psychoanalytical, ecological, linguistic and neuroscientific theories; behavioristic, cognitive, constructivist, structuralist and contextual views on the understanding of the category "development" in the learning process (Tagunova, 2016). The authors of western theories of learning and education carefully monitor the dynamics of the development theories. They always rely on them in their designs. The scientific level of contemporary western theories is increasing with the improvements in the knowledge of the possible ways of students' development. Thanks to the theories of development the western theories of learning and education passed the way from a fetish biologizing position of Gesell and Muller to the application of Erickson's psychosocial ideas, Piaget's theory, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, and Gardner's ideas about multiple intelligence, as well as of the data of neurophysiology and neuropsychology.

In this article, we tried to show a huge impact of theories' context on the understanding of foreign theories of learning and education.

The foreign comparativists Sob and Kowalczyk also challenge researchers understanding of what context is. They argue that in any study of the phenomenon in a comparative study, the context should be considered as a key problem of explaining the object under study (Sobe, Kowalczyk, 2013).

## 7. Conclusion

This article is addressed to some aspects of understanding of foreign experience. It shows only a small section of possibilities to understand the western theoretical thought. Meanwhile, even this short analysis of the problems of foreign pedagogy understanding shows how carefully we should make sense of the experience of others, how carefully we should use the ideas of other cultures. Remembering this fact our study of foreign experience will enhance the scientific level of the national education.

## Acknowledgement

The article was prepared within the framework of the state task FGBICU "Institute for Strategy of Education Development of the Russian Academy of Education" Under the projects № 27.8520.2017 /BCh and № 27.7091.2017/BCh.

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