IFTE 2017
III International Forum on Teacher Education

COLLEGE STUDENTS' TOLERANCE: CASE-STUDY IN KAZAN TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE

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Abstract

Tolerance is a personal or social characteristic that implies the realization of the fact that the world and the social environment are multidimensional, it means that the views of this world can be different and they cannot and should not be reduced to uniformity or taken advantage of (Tishkov). Tolerance education is the first, initial and very important level of students' development.

The review of the available scientific literature showed that the study of the problem of tolerance and its development in educational environment has become a question of a vital importance recently. However, this topic has been studied in a fragmented and non-systematic way so far. The existing research results reveal that tolerance is not considered to be a goal of students upbringing in a college unfortunately.

The purpose of this research was to study and assess college students' tolerance maturity and to give a scientific credence to a special psychological and pedagogical work on students' tolerance improving. The obtained results became a recommendations basis for organizing special psychological and pedagogical work for students' tolerance improving. 96 GAOUSPO Kazan College Small Business and Entrepreneurship students aged 16-17 took part in the experimental part of our research. Diagnostics was carried out using an express questionnaire "Index of Tolerance" (Soldatov, Kravtsova, Khukhlaev, Shaigerova). The study materials are of practical value for educational psychologists, teachers, deputy directors of education and curators.

1.   Introduction

The problem of tolerance is highly relevant for the Russian Federation. Russia is a multiethnic, multi-confessional and multilingual country with rich cultural traditions.

Tolerance education is currently the most important task for the Russian education system. Tolerance education is not sufficiently developed for adolescents of secondary vocational colleges, in which the student body is usually comprised of different nationalities and representatives of various social groups.

Modern young people are not immune to various destructive influence due to their psychological and age-specific features such as suggestibility, openness, emotional immaturity. Accumulation and realization of negative remonstrative potential is most rapid in youth environment.

The problem stems from several peculiarities related to youth development. Adolescence is a period of personality development and it is very important to establish a correct life view of future country citizens at this period.

The problem of tolerance is a huge field for research. The relevance and practical importance of this topic has increased due to emergent processes taking place in economic, social and political spheres and the growth of conflicts on confessional, ethnic grounds.

After reviewing of psychological and pedagogical literature and various practices, we concluded that a cultured, cooperation-oriented person with a high level of self-respect is in demand in modern society. This person is supposed to be tolerant to someone else's way of life, customs, feelings, opinions and ideas as well.

It should be emphasized that the concept of "tolerance", despite its long existence, has not yet been unambiguously interpreted in scientific literature and is the subject of heated discussions of many studies.

2.   Problem Statement

Certain aspects of this problem have been studied by many Russian and foreign scientists.A major contribution to the development of a theory of tolerance was made by representatives of humanistic philosophy and psychology Buber (1993), Maslow (Maslow, May, Allport., Rogers, 2005), Rogers (Maslow, May, Allport., Rogers, 2005), Allport (Maslow, May, Allport., Rogers, 2005). They investigated psychology of forgiveness, psychology and pedagogy of nonviolence in their studies. Asmolov (2005), Betti (2010), Allport (2003), Pchelintseva (2001), Soldatova (Soldatova et al., 2002) revealed theoretical approaches to a definition for a concept of "tolerance". Zolotukhin (2001), Kondakov (1999) and others studied large-mindedness and tolerance in the ontology of social consciousness and self-consciousness. Asmolov (2005), Kazakov (2006), Tishkov (1997) investigated tolerance in the process of integrity acquiring, Baranova and Bardier (2007) examined a question of society tolerance in the context of a market economy. Works of Bondoreva (2003), Soldatova (1998) and Petritsky (1993) are devoted to interethnic tolerance. Zimbuly (1996) and others did some researches on a problem of moral boundaries of tolerance.

The modern dictionary of foreign words gives the following definition to the word «tolerance» - it is derived from a Latin term «tolerantia» and first, it is considered as body's capacity to endure continued subjection to any substance or poison; secondly, as an ability or willingness to tolerate anyone or anything (The modern dictionary of foreign words, 1993).

In English, according to the Oxford Dictionary, tolerance is "the ability or willingness to tolerate the existence of opinions or behaviour that one dislikes or disagrees with". In French – it is "respect for another person's freedom, his/her way of life, behavior, political and religious views". In a German-Russian dictionary the word «tolerant» is defined as broadminded about someone else's opinion. In Chinese, tolerance is treated as "permission, admission, manifestation of generosity towards others"; in Persian –patience, large-mindness, endurance, readiness for compromise [21, p. 6].

Dahl in the "Explanatory dictionary of the living Great Russian language" gives the following interpretation of tolerance: "Tolerance – to endure, to sustain, to bear, to stand, to need, to suffer, to persevere, to be courageous, to hold on, not to be exhausted, not to be discouraged; to await, wait for something better, to hope, to be mild-tempered, to reconcile, to condescend, to admit, to indulge, to connive, to please, to give latitude; not to rush, not to hurry, not to hasten, to have a knack of a thing". (Dahl,1955). Most of modern dictionaries define this concept in a similar way. Thus, the "Soviet Encyclopedic Dictionary" under the general editorship of Prokhorov defines tolerance as "... an ability to accept other people's opinions, beliefs, behavior" (Panina, 2005).

The psychological meaning of tolerance is most fully reflected in the English-Russian psychological dictionary in which it is defined as "acquired stability; resistance to uncertainty; ethnic sustainability; stability limits (human endurance); stress sustainability; conflict resistance" (Zhukova, 2008). The dictionary of socio-psychological concepts, edited by Kuzmina defines tolerance as a personal characteristic which enables people to view others with an open mind.

In scientific literature, tolerance is primarily considered as the respect and recognition of equality, rejection of domination and violence, acceptance of culture diversity, of various norms and beliefs and the refusal of anything that tries to reduce this diversity to uniformity.

The analysis of different approaches to the definition of the concept "tolerance" reveals that there is a disagreement on the nature of tolerance, its characteristics, personal traits, as well as this analysis brings to the surface various unsolved problems related to this issue.

Modern pedagogy emphasizes the fact that objective reality forces us to pay more attention to the development of teenagers' interethnic relations. Therefore, promoting ethnic tolerance is required. Ethnic tolerance enables one to adopt an attitude which helps one accept other ethnic groups' values and cultural characteristics and prepare for interethnic contacts. The ethnic tolerance is considered to be a dominant culture in interethnic relations. It is necessary to develop it through the educational process as a personality orientation with the help of constructive interactions with the representatives of other ethnic groups.

In our research we consider a working definition the one formulated in the UN Resolution on the Declaration of the International Year of Tolerance. According to it "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human". (Declaration of Principles on Tolerance – UNESCO, 1995).

A number of authors define the notion of "tolerance" on the base of its antonym – "intolerance", which manifests itself through various forms of bigotry (from a sense of detachment in daily life to violence and genocide). Anger, disgust, and contempt are the "triad of hostility", as the intrinsic characteristics of intolerance.

In a college educational environment, the intolerance manifestation can be determined not only by a modern society instability, but also by specific features of a subjects involved in an educational process. There are several reasons for that: college students are of different age groups; students are the representatives of different cultures, it affects differences in their mentality; increasing mobility flow: teachers and students interchange, teachers are focused on a solution of narrow objectives of a taught discipline; representation of various ideological positions and views as well as political beliefs among teachers and students in educational environment.

Intolerant relations cause the incitement of emerging interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, the incitement of national hatred between students, upsurges of violence (physical or mental abuse through bullying, robberies and extortion, fights and murders, etc.). In contrast to this, tolerant attitudes of the participants of the educational process contribute to the developing of their abilities to accept others as an objectively existing reality (their positions, thoughts, ideas, etc.) without any irritation, humiliation, resentment or superiority. Tolerance, as a moral quality of a person, represents an active form of interaction, it relates to identification of things that unite and not divide people. Tolerant person treats another human as a different person but not as an alien.

Tolerance requires moral and legal basis and a tolerant mindset as well as a culture of tolerant behavior and communication and a culture of self-assertiveness and self-realization. In turn, tolerance as a mental feature or a personal trait is not inherent and can possibly never manifest itself.

Therefore, tolerance must be purposefully developed. Tolerance education implies the abandonment of prejudice and negative social stereotypes in favor of an objective attitude to any person, regardless of his/her individual characteristics.

We associate our research with adolescence. Youth is considered to be a psychological age of transition to self-sufficiency, the period of self-determination, the acquisition of mental, ideological and civic maturity, a period of a worldview development, moral awareness and self-consciousness (Usova, 2009), Tolstikh considers youth, as a second transition stage of personality development (Kulagina, 2001). Youth is a very important period for the tolerance cultivation and development.

3. Research Questions

What is the level of tolerance among college students and what is the expediency of organizing a special psychological and pedagogical work to improve it.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our research was to study and assess college students' tolerance maturity and to give a scientific credence to a special psychological and pedagogical work for students' tolerance development.

5.   Research Methods

The study was carried out with the help of the following set of methods: psychological and pedagogical literature review, pedagogical observation and diagnostic testing – the express questionnaire "Index of tolerance" (by Soldatova, Kravtsova, Khukhlaev, Shaigerova) (Soldatova, Kravtsova, Khukhlaev, Shaigerova, 2002). This questionnaire provided a measure of ethnic tolerance, social tolerance and tolerance as a personality trait.

For the quantitative part of the research a total result has been calculated without subscales division.

According to the express questionnaire "Index of Tolerance", each students' answer for a direct questionnaire statement was given a score of 1 to 6 ("absolutely disagree" 1 point, "completely agree" – 6 points). A reverse points scale was assigned to the responses to contrary statements ("absolutely disagree" 6 points, "completely agree" – 1 point). Then the points were summed up.

The numbers of direct statements: 1, 9, 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22

The numbers of the contrary statements: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19.

The individual or group assessments of the revealed tolerance level was carried out according to the following levels:

22-60 – low level of tolerance. Such results imply a high level of person's intolerance and presence of distinct intolerant attitudes towards the surrounding world and people.

61-99 – intermediate level. Such results are shown by those respondents who consider a combination of both tolerant and intolerant features as natural. In some social situations they behave tolerantly, in others they can show intolerance.

100-132 – high level of tolerance. Representatives of this group have distinct features of a tolerant personality. At the same time, it is necessary to realize that top-high scores on this scale can indicate the trends of blurring the lines of "tolerance boundaries" and can be connected with psychological infantilism, laissez-faire attitude, leniency or indifference. It is also important to take into account possible respondents with a high degree of social desirability. (Especially if they know researcher' views and study purposes).

For a qualitative analysis of the tolerance aspects, it is possible to use a separate subscales analyses:

1.Ethnic tolerance: 2, 4, 7, 11, 14, 18, 21.

2.Social tolerance: 1, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 20.

3.Tolerance as a personal trait: 3, 5, 9, 13, 17, 19, 22.

The subscale "ethnic tolerance" reveals person' attitude to other ethnic groups and his/her attitude in the sphere of intercultural communication. The subscale "social tolerance" allows to study tolerant and intolerant manifestations in relation to various social groups (minorities, criminals, mentally ill people). It also shows personal attitudes toward certain social processes. Subscale "tolerance as a personal trait" allows to assess personality traits, attitudes and beliefs that largely determine person's attitude to outward things.

6. Findings

The experimental study was being conducted among a sample of students of GAOUSPO College of Small Business and Entrepreneurship in Kazan. The sample consisted of 96 students, aged 16-17.

To determine the level of students' tolerance development, an Express Questionnaire – «Index of Tolerance» (by Soldatova, Kravtsova, Khukhlaev, Shaigerova) was used (Soldatova, Kravtsova, Khukhlaev, Shaigerova, 2002). It allows to assess ethnic and social tolerance and tolerance as a personal trait.

The following results were found in data processing obtained with the help of the Express Questionnaire "Tolerance Index":

The test results allowed to find out which level of general tolerance the group of students has as a whole, taking into account all facets of this phenomenon in relation to others (Table 1).

Table 01. Levels of general tolerance development among college students

	Low level	Average level	High level
Number of students	0	92	4
%	0	95,8	4,2

We obtained the following results for general tolerance: 95.8% of students had an average level of tolerance. Such results allowed us to suggest that this part of the youth can behave differently, depending on social circumstances. A high level of tolerance was shown by 4,2% of students. It could reveal a good level of a stable developing society, on the one hand. On the other hand, it could indicate the trends of blurring the lines of "tolerance boundaries". For example, it could signal about psychological infantilism, laissez-faire attitude, leniency or indifference. It was also important to take into account that there possibly were respondents who demonstrated a high degree of social desirability.

For the purpose of this study, the authors had formed a list of statements to identify students' ethnic tolerance. Respondents were offered to evaluate them on a scale from 1 to 6 (6 points scale). The following statements were chosen: "There are more problems in mixed couples, than when people of the same nationality are getting married", "Caucasian people will be treated better if they change their behavior", "It is normal to think that your nationality is better than others", "I am ready to accept a person of any nationality as a member of my family", "I would like to have people of different nationalities among my friends", "It is really hard to treat kindly people of some nationalities ", "I can imagine a dark skinned person as a close friend of mine"

Apparently, this list included the most acute ethnic prejudices associated with representatives of different races in modern society (on racial grounds) and representatives of Muslim countries (on a religious basis).

The study results showed that most of college students had an average level of ethnic tolerance development. These students harmoniously combined both tolerant and intolerant features, and showed them as suited the situation (Table 02).

Table 02. Levels of ethnic tolerance development among college students

	Low level	Average level	High level
Number of students	0	88	8
%	0	91,7	8,3

The next stage of the experiment was the identification of students' social tolerance level. The study brought the following results. A high level of social tolerance was demonstrated by 12.5% of students. Taking into account obtained results, it could be concluded that the majority of adolescents had an average level of social tolerance (Table 03).

Table 03. Levels of social tolerance development among college students

	Low level	Average level	High level
Number of students	0	84	12
%	0	87,5	12,5

This subscale reveals social and moral personality's behavior motives in the interaction process with people of other social groups, tolerant and intolerant manifestations in relation to various minorities, criminals, mentally ill, homeless people, etc.

A high level of development of tolerance as a personal trait was demonstrated by 20,8% of students (becoming the highest in comparison with the previous two). It indicates that the highest level of tolerance development among college students is represented by a personal trait tolerance.

Table 04. Levels of development of tolerance as a personal trait among college students

	Low level	Average level	High level
Number of students	0	76	20
%	0	79,2	20,8

Thus, this study showed that the majority of students demonstrated an average level of general tolerance development. In general, the students' scores, obtained within the research, had an average level, so it is necessary to carry out a set of activities to improve the level of students' tolerance.

7.   Conclusion

Tolerance education is impossible to organize under the conditions of authoritarian "teacher-student" communication style. Therefore, this is one of the most important tolerance education conditions: a teacher has to master democratic mechanisms of learning process organization and communication with students.

Becoming tolerant requires profound emotional and intellectual work and sometimes causes mental tension. It can be achieved only on a voluntary basis and through genuine willingness to change one's own stereotypes and attitude.

A teacher pedagogical activity should be based on a common sense, face-to-face communication with the use of encouraging words and through explaining different concepts. All that is important not just in itself, not as a way to tolerance and understanding, but as a way to a tolerant interaction and mutual understanding.

In order to establish a correspondence between the "estimated" and "declarative" conceptualizations of vocational college students and to develop their tolerance, we could recommend 2 blocks of events. The first one is an educational block (lectures, discussions, film therapy, training workshops on empathy and tolerant attitude developing, role-playing games). A second block includes extra-curriculum activities (meetings with alumni, team-building trainings, themed nights and meetings).

Acknowledgements

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