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THE ROLE OF ETHNO-CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURAL STUDENT'S PERSONALITY

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Abstract

The role of ethno-cultural knowledge in the development of a multicultural student's personality is substantiated in the article. The study emphasizes the need for the development of a multicultural personality due to the processes of globalization, ethnic diversification of our society, some tension of interstate relations and other factors that influence the world outlook of an individual and the constructiveness of interethnic interaction. The methodological basis for conducting the study of the problem is given. The main contradiction states the necessity of creating a modern psychological and pedagogical system for the development of a multicultural personality. The results of the empirical research, reflecting the correlation between the process of multicultural personality development and the level of ethno-cultural knowledge of students, are presented. The findings of the study are based on diagnostic surveys carried out in three Russian cities. In the course of study the dependencies are revealed and the principles taken into account at the formative investigating stage are developed. The article describes the mechanism of multicultural personality development at higher education. The conclusions concerning the need for working-out psychological and pedagogical conditions for the effective development of a multicultural student's personality in the educational process are formulated. The results obtained will be of use to higher education institutions.

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Keywords: Ethno-cultural knowledge, multicultural personality, interethnic relations.

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1. Introduction

The development of a multicultural personality (MPD) is the key to constructive relations, state integrity and peaceful coexistence of representatives of different nationalities. The importance of ethnic and cultural knowledge increases, especially in the situation of ongoing ethnic and demographic social transformation. Students permanently have the opportunity to communicate not only with their close environment, but due to the Internet with representatives of different nationalities as well. MPD is determined by many factors, both external and internal. One of the main internal factors of MPD is the need for knowledge about ethnic cultures, national characteristics of people with whom a person interacts (especially of those living nearby). Socio-economic conditions of the time are the determinants of interethnic relations. They create prerequisites for their changes. Being the basis, ethno-cultural knowledge serves as a cognitive component of personal development. At present, the improvement of the education system results in the targets (in the education standards of higher school) to form the competencies aimed at developing the ability to analyze and consider the cultural diversities in the process of intercultural interaction, to practice tolerance in conditions of intercultural social diversity. In modern psychological-pedagogical science there is a theoretical and practical background creating the methodological basis for MPD by means of ethnic and cultural knowledge. Modern scientific works on the problem of MPD and ethno-cultural knowledge as its basis focus on the following aspects: the identity transformations in the virtual world (Asmolov & Asmolov, 2009), the implementation of multicultural education (Astashova, Bondyreva, & Zhuk, 2019), the problem of interethnic relations in multiethnic educational environment (Batarchuk, 2017), the educatory potential of the educational environment (Berezhnaya & Vyunova, 2008), the acmeological vector of personality development (Derkach, 2009), the socio-psychological foundations of multiculturalism (Lebedeva, Tatarko, & Berry, 2016), the sociocultural factors of family self-determination (Merzlyakova, 2016), the intercultural competence (Koval & Sakhno, 2015), the language personality (Rezunova, 2016), the cross-cultural communication (Shachnev, 2016), the multicultural personality (Mikheeva, 2018), the cultural self-identity of a personality (Millrood, 2016), the ethno-cultural competence (Stefanenko & Kupavskaya, 2010), the ethnic image (Khotinets & Molchanova, 2016), models of multicultural education (Khakimov, 2011), etc. Despite the wide scientific popularity of the problem of MPD, its intercultural communication and cultural self-determination, there are still contradictions connecting with the necessity to work out psychological and pedagogical conditions for MPD and with the lack of practical implementation of special programs in the higher education process. The advanced model of MPD, mechanisms and conditions for its developing are indispensable. The formed ethno-cultural knowledge to objectively perceive and understand the ethno-cultural differences of people is the basis of MPD..

2. Problem Statement

The current need to study MPD derives from the necessity of maintaining and developing constructive interethnic relations (Batarchuk, 2017, 2019). In present-day conditions students have great opportunities for intercultural communication. The conditions for the formation of ethno-cultural knowledge for the successful MPD are of practical importance for the education system. At the existing stage of mass media progress the youth, engaging into interethnic interaction, could fall into a confusing situation, social and psychological tension, often arising due to the lack of knowledge of ethno-cultural characteristics. The incipient problems of an individual are related to the factors of personality development in the multicultural educational space (Batarchuk, 2010), to the nature of ethnic identity (Merzlyakova & Bibarsova, 2017), to ethno-linguistic processes (Zharkynbekova, 2018), and other social, psychological and pedagogical circumstances. The conceptual ideas for MPD are presented in the psychological and pedagogical science. They are based on the need to work out a mechanism of a pedagogical situation in the structure of the educational process (Borytko, 2015), to design pedagogical systems (Serikov, 1999), to form multiethnic educational environment (Gurov, 2004), to construct educational processes taking into account the multiethnic country and the world (Kuzmin, 1999), on the principle of tolerance (Lukina, 2016; Derkach, 2003), on personal reflection (Karpov, 2003). In the science there is a theoretical framework of MPD. Its key emphasis is placed on the role of the educational process, and formation of ethno-cultural knowledge of an individual. However, the empirical researches studying a number of individual components of a multicultural personality and the factors influencing its development are not insufficient. A complex model of MPD is needed, with the formation of ethno-cultural knowledge being its main direction. Ethno-cultural knowledge contributes to the objective assessment of interethnic interaction situations, neutralizes ethnic stereotypes and develops cognitive interest in ethno-cultural characteristics. Resolving contradictions between the need of a person for constructive interethnic relations among young people and the necessity to identify psychological and pedagogical conditions for MPD in the higher education process makes a scientific problem of the research.

3. Research Questions

3.1. To develop psychological and pedagogical conditions for improvement of ethno-cultural knowledge of students.

3.2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the conditions proposed with a pilot survey.

These questions of theoretical and practical interest made it possible to designate the objective of the research.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study is aimed at revealing the psychological and pedagogical conditions of improving ethno-cultural knowledge of students being a cognitive component of a multicultural personality, and determining the role of ethno-cultural knowledge in MPD of students.

In this regard, it was hypothesized that the improvement of ethno-cultural knowledge contributes to MPD of students.

In order to achieve the research results, the following tasks were performed:

1. Comparative analyses of the level of ethno-cultural knowledge were conducted, with such indicators as the nature of inter-ethnic relations, willingness to participate in ethnic contacts, ethnic stereotypes, and reflection taken into consideration.

2. The nature of the correlation between ethno-cultural knowledge and the level of student's MPD was assessed.

5. Research Methods

The following methods were used to study the content and structural characteristics of a multicultural student's personality: the author's questionnaire "Social representations of a multicultural personality" by D.S. Batarchuk; "Relations diagnostic test" by G.U. Soldatova; "Ethno-cultural competence evaluation questionnaire" by V.N. Gurov; "Ethnic stereotypes" by K. Brel and D. Katz; "Participation in ethnic contacts" and "Diagnostics of reflexivity development" by A.V. Karpov.

At the analytical stage mathematical and statistical methods were used, ascertaining the veracity of the research results. The questionnaire survey of students, diagnostic interviews, the method of problem situations, special trainings and situations as psychological and pedagogical conditions for MPD of students were used as research tools. The study involved 2,127 students (n=2.127). The number of respondents participating in the study is increased from year to year so that to check the reliability of the results and to reveal new regularities. The questionnaire survey was conducted among the students of the higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation (the Astrakhan State University, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Bryansk branch), the Siberian Federal University.

6. Findings

The article presents the findings reflecting the correlation between the process of MPD, its main characteristics and the level of ethno-cultural knowledge of students. The study was conducted between 2009 and 2018. The students, having participated in the study, belong to different nationalities. The questionnaire on identification of social perceptions of the students contained the questions connected with students' ideas of a multicultural personality (its interpretation, main characteristics); common and diverse contents of such concepts as "multicultural identity", "ethnic identification", "civic consciousness"; the need for creating conditions for MPD; perceptions about the generated conditions for MPD in their places of residence and the difficulties you may encounter in the process. Social perceptions of the students about a multicultural personality are regarded as the process of deduction, based on students' perception, knowledge and comprehension of a personality interacting with representatives of different nationalities, its characteristics, nature and role in the interethnic diversity.

As a result, significant data were obtained. Numerous free answers of the students (2.127) were grouped into separate blocks. A total of 98 judgment groups on the students' perceptions of a multicultural personality were made up, the main of which are: "I do not know" (34%), "a multicultural personality" (3.98%), "a person who respects his culture and the cultures of other peoples" (5.97%), "a person with an active vital position" (11.94%), "I know other cultures" (14.95%), "a person who tolerates the representatives of different nationalities, knows the peculiarities of different cultures and respects the culture of his people and others (14.95%), "an educated, versatile person, accepting the views and characteristics of other cultures" (5.32%), "a person with a sense of empathy and tolerance, living in peace and harmony both with people of his own cultural group and with representatives of others" (7.96%), "a person who accepts the diversity of different cultures" (9.32%). The main students' ideas about the general and various characteristics of the concepts of "multicultural personality", "ethnic identification", "civic consciousness" were "I do not know"(68.44%), "the concepts denoting the ability to distinguish cultures, but at the same time to respect them, and not to be separated from them" (7.32%), "nothing, they are quite different concepts" (11.94%), "the concepts presented characterize the prevention of ethnic conflicts" (21.28%), "the general is that an individual bears the personal responsibility for the attitude, and actions relating to representatives of a particular nationality" (5.32%), "they characterize self-determination of an individual in culture" (3%). It should be noted that students have given positive characteristics of most of these concepts, but they are not significant if the number and percentage of the students are taken in mind. The question "Why is it necessary to promote MPD?" was answered "I do not know" (42.52%), and only a few noted "for education" (10.64%), "to broaden horizons, to develop an individual's personality and comprehensively develop yourself in general" (10.64%), "a multicultural personality is more able to understand and accept the traditions of other cultures, peoples, preserving and protecting their own traditions and customs" (1.32%), "because we live in a single world and in the most multinational country, in Russia. This is our strength" (1.98%). It should be noted that students are not fully aware of the importance of MPD.

The study of the students' ideas regarding the conditions for MPD in the city/town they live in has found the following: "I do not know" (69.78%), "probably would not" (19.32%), "the state should pay attention to it" (1.98%), and «I cannot answer" (10.64%). The students were offered to mark out the difficulties people can face in the process of MPD. They were "I do not know" (73.74%), "stereotypes"(3.38%),"the language barrier, religious values and contradictions in them" (1.69%), "intolerance to other peoples, unwillingness to understand other peoples" (1.69%), "a person's ideology, traditions, values, mentality, character, an environmental factor" (3.38%) and others.

The analysis of the obtained results about the social representation indicated a greater proportion of students' ignorance. This fact was assessed as a negative factor influencing MPD. The data concerning students' ignorance were the motive to clarify the national composition of the students and the city/town they live in. The analysis revealed that the students having given the answer "I do not know" were to a greater extent from Bryansk (50.78%), Krasnoyarsk (12%), and Astrakhan (7%). The analysis of the national composition of the regions and curricula, group and individual discussions with students and lecturers made it possible to ascertain that in the regions of the Russian Federation with the less ethnically diversified composition there are less training specializations with a minimum number of academic disciplines (or the lack thereof), forming competence for intercultural interaction. Insufficient special psychological and pedagogical work makes MPD less effective. In the first place, a person permanently living in a multi-ethnic region adapts to the representatives of different nationalities from birth. In the second place, special psychological and pedagogical support contributes to the development of ethno-cultural knowledge and acts as a backbone component of a multicultural personality. Further, to clarify the results of the study, the data obtained by the "Ethno-cultural competition evaluation questionnaire" by V.N. Gurov were analyzed; and their comparison with the indicators developed, characterizing the ethno-cultural competence, ascertained the following levels (Fig.1). It should be noted that the term "ethno-cultural competence" refers to the total available knowledge concerning national specificities of one's own and other ethnic groups, skills, experience and willingness to interact with representatives of different ethnicity.

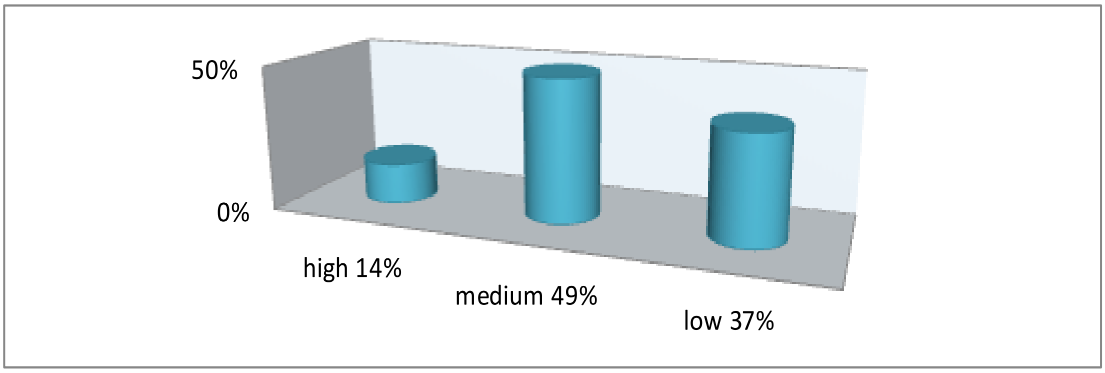

Figure 01. Levels of ethno-cultural competence of the students

Figure 1 shows the formed levels of ethno-cultural competence of students (low, medium, high).

The typical characteristics of the low level are proneness to conflicts, the poor knowledge and information awareness of the culture of one's own and other ethnic groups, unwillingness to the constructive interethnic dialogue, and the existence of national stereotypes. The medium level reflects the fragmentation of ethno-cultural awareness of the national specificities of ethnic culture of different ethnic groups, partial experience of constructive interaction with representatives of different nationalities. The high level implies the necessary knowledge of students concerning the traditions, history, culture, national peculiarities of ethnic groups inhabiting the region, the country and the world as a whole. It should be noted that motivation and awareness of the need for knowledge of ethnically diversified environment appear an important factor in the development of ethno-cultural knowledge of students. Further the results concerning students' participation in ethnic contacts were analyzed. The study at this stage took into account how the students would like to participate in ethnic contacts in the future. Work, leisure, kinship relations, frequency of communication with relatives, language of communication (foreign), knowledge of the native language in the family serve as the contact areas. The more detailed results are presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Participation in the ethnic students' contacts

Contact Area	Participation in Ethnic Contacts	Desired Participation in Ethnic Contacts
1. Work:		
HEC	4.65%	5.65%
HEC & PEC	58.8%	64.12%
PEC	36.55%	30.23%
2. Leisure:		
HEC	2.99%	3.6%
HEC & PEC	50.5%	63.46%

PEC	46.51%	32.94%
3. Kinship Relations:		
HEC are (available)	24.92%	28.24%
HEC are not (available)	75.08%	71.76%
4. Contacts Frequency with Relatives:		
Frequently	69.44%	71.76%
Infrequently	28.9%	25.91%
No Contacts	1.66%	2.33%
5. Foreign Language Communication Level:		
Good	6.98%	46.51%
Moderate	48.5%	32.56%
I don't know	44.52%	20.93%
6. Knowledge of the Native Language in the Family:		
I know	81.4%	89.04%
I don't know	18.6%	10.96%

Notes: HEC – heteroethnic contacts, PEC - proper ethnic contacts

It should be noted that "work" as a contact area is considered as the implementation of joint work. It is not strictly related to professional activities, as full-time students (especially first year ones) may not carry out work in the organization.

Further, the method of "Ethnic stereotypes" by K. Brel and D. Katz made it possible to analyze autostereotypes and heterostereotypes by three groups of qualities (positive, neutral, negative). As a result, it was found that in terms of autostereotypes students noted the following: positive qualities (generous, kind, responsive, sincere, intelligent) – 69.5%; neutral (trusting, strong–willed, independent, stubborn, naive) – 54.1%; negative (carefree, aggressive, hot-tempered, unorganized, capricious) – 27.2%. The following data were obtained in relation to ethnic heterostereotypes: positive (21.7%), neutral (16.6%), and negative (13.6%). It should be noted that the percentages refer to the number of qualities selected from each group (the students were offered positive (23), neutral (24), and negative (22) qualities).

Then the data analysis according to the method "Relations diagnostic test" by G.U. Soldatova was carried out. According to the instructions of this diagnostic test, the more the results with a negative value are recorded, the higher the intensity of the negative stereotype is; and vice versa, the more the results with positive signs are fixed, the higher the intensity of the positive stereotype is. With the results close to zero there is high uncertainty (ambivalence) of the attitude when the respondent shows no clear preference to the positive or negative assessment. Students were asked to mark the intensity of qualities first in relation to their nationality, and then to a representative of another nationality. Their answers were written down in a special respondent form.

Eventually, the following results were obtained. In relation to their nationality the positive attitude (mean 0.15) was given by such students as Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Balkars, Greeks, Dagestanis, Yazidis, Ingushs, Kazakhs, Kalmyks, Karachais, Moldavians, Germans, Nogays, Ossetians, Russians, Tatars, Tuvinians, Turkmen, Khakasses, Chechens. The negative attitude to their nationality was given by the students belonging to Jews and Ukrainians (mean 0.019). The negative assessment of their nationality coincided with the period of the strained relations between Russia and Ukraine. This was pointed out by the students belonging to the Ukrainian nationality, but permanently living on the territory of the Russian Federation. The negative attitude was shown by 2% of Ukrainian students out of 12% of students having taken part in the study; all the rest assessed their ethnicity positively. It is important to note that such results have not been observed for 4 years of the study before the aggravation of relations between Russia and Ukraine. The research data concerning some other nationalities presented the positive attitude of the students to Russians, the Greeks, Karachais, Khakasses, Georgians, Kazakhs, Tatars, Jews, Chechens, Koreans, Armenians, Kalmyks, Azerbaijanis (mean 0.16). As for other nationalities, a negative attitude was to Karachais, Khakasses, Jews, Chechens (mean 0.043). Sometimes students have got negative attitude, but it is not so intensive. The negatively expressed attitude to the representatives of other nationalities was the following: Greeks (3%), Jews (3%), Kazakhs (6.2%), Kalmyks (3%). To solve the research problems, the reflexivity development levels of the students were analyzed. According to the levels the students were ranged as follows: low (47.48%), medium (49.8%), and high (2.72%). The low level is characterized by the lack of self-actualization, poor self-control in the situation of interethnic interaction, impulsivity in decision-making, lack of inclination to self-questioning, and objective assessment of life situations. The fragmentary analysis of the previous personality's experience in the current situation, the inclination to self-questioning in specific situations or separate cases, the defects of reflection due to inadequate self-control are typical of the medium level. The specifics of the high level are the desire of an individual for constant self-analysis of situations, high self-control, adequate behavioural responses, and a tendency to compare the facts and analyze their relationship, readiness for forecasting. At the same time, analysis and programming of behaviour in a given situation of interethnic interaction, cognitive style of analyzing the information obtained, focus on objectivity in the formation of an adequate, real image of an individual were taken into account as the main reflection characteristics. At the final stage, the results of identifying the levels of students' MPD are given in dynamics: in the first stage (pilot survey, n=2,127 students) and in the second one, after the formative experiment on a limited sample (n=115 students). The data are presented in Figure 02 and Figure 03.

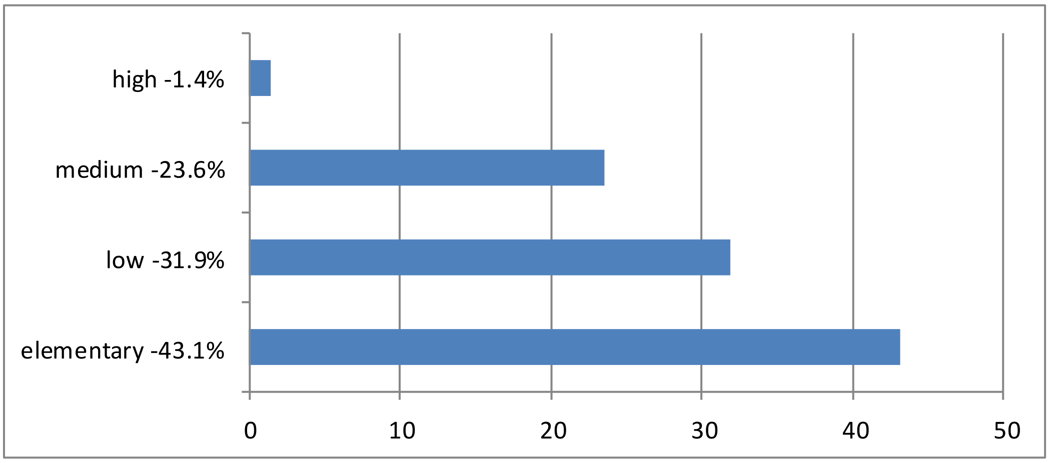

Figure 02. Levels of multicultural personality development at the beginning of the experiment

Carrying out the research in the framework of a system-holistic approach, four levels of MPD have been singled out on the basis of the technique by V.S. Ilyin.

The elementary level (neutral-conflict level) is characterized by low development of the structural components of a multicultural personality, and the lack of communication between them. The cognitive component is represented by disconnected, incomplete and unsystematic knowledge of history, literature, and culture of their ethnic group and others living in the region, country and the world.

It is followed by the low level (unstable level). Individual components of a multicultural personality without sufficient connection between them are typical of representatives of this level. The cognitive component contains incomplete knowledge of the history, literature, and culture of their ethnic group and other peoples (mainly inhabiting the region), the peoples of the world. This knowledge is of basic literacy. This level of knowledge mainly resulted from the personal experience of an individual, under the influence of what he had learned by that time in his family, at school, in certain economic, cultural and living conditions.

The medium level (ethno-tolerant level) assumes the developed components of a multicultural personality, though this system is characterized by some instability and ambiguity of the links between the components. Its representatives possess the knowledge about their ethnic group and others at the level of functional literacy. Knowledge of the history, literature, and culture of their ethnic group and others living in the region, and peoples of the world are fragmentary. The motives for achieving a higher level of ethno-cultural competence are not sufficiently formed.

The high level (reflexive level) is characterized by the integrity of the system of a multicultural personality, well-developed links between the components formed. Sufficiently deep and conscious knowledge of the history, literature, culture of his/her ethnic group, and ethnic groups living in the region, and the peoples of the world is typical of such a multicultural personality.

Further, in order to achieve positive dynamics, a mechanism of psychological and pedagogical support for students' MPD in the higher educational process has been worked out. The mechanism is designing an entire pedagogical situation of MPD, consisting of particular pedagogical situations. A pedagogical situation, regarded as a part of an educational process, including its integral characteristics, is the result of relationships and interaction of all its components (objectives, contents, forms, methods, relationships, requirements, etc.). Besides the pedagogical situation is comprehende d as a psychological and pedagogical condition. The complexes of pedagogical situations were aimed at: 1) actualization of students' ethnic identification, the formation of their adequate viewing themselves and others from different sides (emotional, cognitive); 2) broadening of the cognitive component and improving emotional and value components; 3) formation of regulatory and behavioural component: the ability to communicate with representatives of different nationalities in compliance with ethical and legal norms in the process of establishing relations between the peoples of the region and the country; 4) actualization and formation of students' ability for personal reflection associated with comprehension themselves as subjects of an ethnic group, as citizens of the country, as people living in the multinational world and multinational Russia.

Additionally, including special training courses in the curriculum and their implementation in the educational process provided a great scientific practical effect. In different years, in order to form a cognitive component of MPD and to improve the level of ethno-cultural competence, such courses as

"Pedagogy of Tolerance", "Ethnopedagogics and Ethnopsychology", "Culture of Interethnic Communication", "Study of the Ethnopedagogic Environment of the Region", "Culture of Interethnic Interaction" and others were implemented in the educational process.

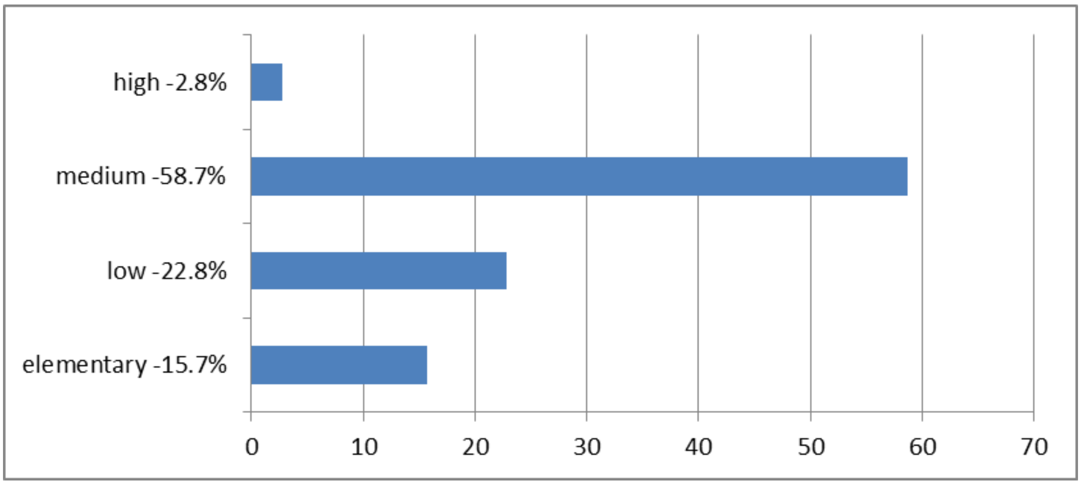

Figure 03. Levels of multicultural personality development after the formative experiment

Working psychological and pedagogical opportunities of MPD on a limited sample (n=115 people) in practice, some positive dynamics was elicited. The results are shown in figure 3.

7. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the results of the research showed that the low level of ethno-cultural knowledge in relation to other factors presented in the study slows down the process of active MPD. In the research process, some correlations were revealed. MPD is uneven due to individual psychological characteristics and the level of ethnic identity. It is more successful in case of students' positive ethnic identification; and when the students have formed the willingness to self-determination in the culture of the peoples of the region, the country and the world, and if there is a sufficiently differentiated structure of value orientations, the important one being such a life value as peace, peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups. And it is active if students have got a high level of the development of personal reflection. The repetition of the formative experiment confirmed the results. The ascertained correlations of students' MPD in the higher educational process has brought about the need to use a set of principles: cultural continuity, a systemic principle, the focus on a constructive inter-ethnic relations in joint activities, the focus on self-development, subjectivity of inter-ethnic cooperation, dialogue interaction, culture conformity, the focus on the individual, the focus on the system of values, nationality, objectification, ethnointegration and ethnodifferentiation. It should be noted that the formation of ethno-cultural knowledge takes an important place in MPD in the higher educational process. The cognitive component is as a backbone component of a multicultural personality.

The study has revealed that the developing of a multicultural personality is successful on the background of the following psychological and pedagogical conditions: unity in understanding of a multicultural personality as a component of spiritual and moral development, allowing students with the positive ethnic identity to show a positive emotional and value attitude to the multinational environment and actively interact with its representatives; consistent implementation of the model of multicultural students' personality development; construction of an integral pedagogical situation of MPD; periodic diagnostics of MPD levels to improve the means of stimulation of students; the organization of students' MPD in pedagogical work through organizational and diagnostic, process- and action-related, control and productive stages; taking into account the age and the individual characteristics of a student (establishing identity being the basis of self-consciousness; developing the ability to differentiate value orientations; developing the need and willingness for personal reflection; developing the ability to self-knowledge, self-analysis, self-evaluation, the desire to determine the place in life and internal position).

A multicultural personality is regarded as an objective of education and upbringing. Currently polyculture of a personality is a requisite subject education, allowing it to perceive multinational environment differently, thereby forming the personal world outlook with vital personal sense of inter-ethnic interaction.

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