# THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to outline the features of the development of students' multicultural competence and determine the role of the teacher in this process. Methods of synthesis, analysis, experiment, questionnaire and observation method has been used in the academic paper. The obtained results have confirmed the hypothesis: increasing the level of multicultural competence of students in a student-centered educational environment can be implemented subject to the active involvement of the teacher. Regular studying foreign languages and non-specialized disciplines also contributes to the development of multicultural competence. To assess multicultural competence, it has been proposed to use criteria that allow evaluating the impact of learning foreign languages and non-specialized disciplines, as well as the participation of teachers - curators. The pedagogical expediency has been proved and the application of forms, means and content components of the multicultural educational environment has been substantiated, as well as recommendations have been developed towards improving the effectiveness of the acquisition of multicultural competence of students with the active involvement of teachers.

**Keywords:** Multicultural education. Higher education. Pedagogical influence. Internationalization of education. Foreign languages.

## O PAPEL DO PROFESSOR NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DE COMPETÊNCIA MULTICULTURAL DE ALUNOS DE INSTITUIÇÕES DE ENSINO SUPERIOR

## EL PAPEL DEL PROFESOR EN EL DESARROLLO DE LA COMPETENCIA MULTICULTURAL DE ESTUDIANTES DE INSTITUCIONES DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

### RESUMO

O objetivo da pesquisa é delinear as características do desenvolvimento da competência multicultural dos alunos e determinar o papel do professor neste processo. Métodos de síntese, análise, experimento, questionário e método de observação foram usados no trabalho acadêmico. Os resultados obtidos confirmaram a hipótese: o aumento do nível de competência multicultural dos alunos em um ambiente educacional centrado no aluno pode ser implementado mediante o envolvimento ativo do professor. O estudo regular de línguas estrangeiras e disciplinas não especializadas também contribui para o desenvolvimento da competência multicultural. Para avaliar a competência multicultural, propõe-se a utilização de critérios que permitam avaliar o impacto da aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras e disciplinas não especializadas, bem como a participação de docentes - curadores. O expediente pedagógico foi comprovado e a aplicação de formas, meios e componentes de conteúdo do ambiente educacional multicultural foi comprovada, bem como recomendações foram desenvolvidas para melhorar a eficácia da aquisição de competência multicultural de alunos com o envolvimento ativo de professores .

**Palavras-chave:** Educação multicultural. Ensino superior. Influência pedagógica. Internacionalização da educação. Línguas estrangeiras.

### RESUMEN

El propósito de la investigación es esbozar las características del desarrollo de la competencia multicultural de los estudiantes y determinar el papel del docente en este proceso. En el artículo académico se han utilizado métodos de síntesis, análisis, experimentación, cuestionario y método de observación. Los resultados obtenidos han confirmado la hipótesis: el aumento del nivel de competencia multicultural de los estudiantes en un entorno educativo centrado en el estudiante puede implementarse sujeto a la participación activa del docente. El estudio regular de lenguas extranjeras y disciplinas no especializadas también contribuye al desarrollo de la competencia multicultural. Para evaluar la competencia multicultural, se ha propuesto utilizar criterios que permitan evaluar el impacto del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras y disciplinas no especializadas, así como la participación de profesores - curadores. Se ha comprobado la conveniencia pedagógica y se ha fundamentado la aplicación de formas, medios y componentes de contenido del entorno educativo multicultural, así como se han desarrollado recomendaciones para mejorar la efectividad de la adquisición de la competencia multicultural de los estudiantes con la participación activa de los docentes.

**Palabras-clave:** Educación multicultural. Educación universitaria. Influencia pedagógica. Internacionalización de la educación. Idiomas extranjeros.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of educational technologies that take into account the needs of a multicultural society has a long history, however, the emergence of digital technologies has accelerated and actualized this process. Firstly, the traditions of multicultural education have long existed in European states (CUMMINS, 2011; POPE, REYNOLDS, MUELLER, 2019; BAYRAM-JACOBS, 2015). Secondly, a large number of foreign students are involved in studying at modern universities. This is established by the correct policy of universities' administrations: a combination of reasonable tuition fees and affordable living expenses, as well as a high level of quality of educational services and recognition of higher education, security, liberal legislation, tolerance of local residents (KIKI-PAPADAKIS, & CHAIMALA, 2016; SYNORUB, MEDYNSKA, 2019).

Numerous foreign specialists are involved in education in most modern Eastern European countries. There are a large number of foreign students who also need to use technologies for the formation of multicultural competences (MYKYTIUK, LYSYTSKA, MELNIKOVA, 2020; IVANOVA, MOSENKIS, & STROKAL, 2020). Understanding the need to study the components and criteria for determining multicultural competence and the role of the teacher in this process, a number of experimental studies appear that are relevant to the issues of multicultural higher education (PETROVIĆ, STARČEVIĆ, CHEN, KOMNENIĆ, 2015).

The purpose of the experimental research is to present ways of developing multicultural competence and outline the role of the teacher in this process:

- to determine criteria for assessing multicultural competence while enhancing the study of foreign languages and special disciplines as well as attracting the capabilities of teacher - curators;
- to compare the results of the control and experimental groups in order to determine the state of formation of multicultural competence at the beginning and at the final stage of the experiment;
- to determine the role of the teacher, lecturer, curator in the process of forming multicultural competence of students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Multicultural competence in the research is considered as a key feature that structures the system of professional and pedagogical competence (ALBERT, 1983). From the standpoint of pedagogy and psychology, multicultural competence is a psychological construct consisting of such components as: value-personal, motivational-activity and cultural-cognitive (ALBERT, 1983). The correlation links, existing between different cultures in the modern society and the global educational space, in principle, are driven by the movement towards providing free access to educational space for a wide range of students without restriction. This first of all means the creation of new opportunities in the educational space, regardless of the linguistic, cultural and mental characteristics of a person. A large number of studies in this area are not related to the problems of higher education. However, there are enough scientific investigations addressing the problems of education and the specifics of translation, teaching foreign languages (JUNINING, MAHENDRA, KUSUMA, 2020; RABABAH, 2020), introduction of digital technologies (KHALEEL, WOOK, ASHAARI, 2018), internationalization in the higher education system (ZHERNOVA, 2018) and multicultural activities in the educational process (MATSUMOTO, HWANG, 2013); bilingual and multilingual features in the educational process (HARDING-ESCH, RILEY, 2003; SHIM, LEE, 2018). Along with this, there are no separate studies examining educational technologies aimed at developing multicultural competence.

The constantly changing situation in the methods of learning foreign languages contributes to the emergence of new investigations on multicultural education (HUSNI HUSNI, 2019). Some of them have been conducted in Eastern European countries (POPOVYCH, RAGIMOV, KORNIENKO, IVANOVA, BURYK, 2020), and the results have been published in English. For instance, in this context it should be mentioned the study of Synorub, Medynska, (2019), which deals with the formation of the multicultural competence of students studying in the media industry. The approaches used by Ukrainian teachers have been described in the outlined study, namely: the role of curatorial work, transformation of curricula and approaches to social action as part of multicultural education (ALBERT, 1983; FRITZ, MOLLENBERG, CHEN, 2002). However, there are not enough comprehensive investigations on the problems of multicultural approach to education. Consequently, work on the development of methods for the formation of multicultural competence in the modern world remains promising for studies as well as determining the degree of a teacher's involvement in such a process.

# METHODS

The experiment was conducted on the basis of several higher educational institutions, namely: Kharkiv State Academy of Culture (Ukraine), KROK University of Economics and Law (Ukraine), as well as partners - the Alcide De Gasperi University of Euroregional Economy in Józefów (Poland). The research continued throughout the duration 1 semester of 2020-2021 academic year in groups involved in studying foreign languages with the participation of teachers. Students were divided into 2 groups: control group (28 people) and experimental group (25 people) - totally 53 people studying the humanities. Throughout the experiment, students in the experimental group were given opportunities for multicultural learning under the guidance of their teachers – curators; the control group was trained according to the traditional curriculum.

The leaders of the experiment combined the students into 2 control groups. The 1st group (CG1) studied according to typical curricula (without the involvement of additional foreign language, a number of new disciplines). The 2nd group (EG2) studied two foreign languages: Polish and English. Both groups had the same number of study hours. The disciplines "History of world culture", "Corporate cultures of the world" were introduced into the 2nd group. By the way, a curator was chosen in the group who taught a foreign language and introduced a number of extracurricular activities in order to form multicultural competence.

Questionnaires were conducted in groups at the beginning, after the end of the semester and at the end of the experiment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the experiment. The outlined questionnaires provided for the assessment of knowledge and acquired skills and the actual readiness towards using a combination of intensive study of two foreign languages and cultural disciplines in the experimental group as well as assessment of active work of teachers - curators in educational activities and extracurricular practical trainings.

At the preparatory stage, teachers - curators of experimental groups were trained on the basis of methodological recommendations on education in the process of learning multicultural competence. The level of training and social-cultural preparedness of the teachers on this program was determined. The experience gained during the training was systematized and taken into account during the formation of questionnaires.

A questionnaire was conducted for students in order to measure the level of multicultural competence and motivation to its improvement. This questionnaire consisted of 25 questions and was divided into 2 blocks: a content block, a behavioral block. When developing the questions, the questionnaires were based on the recommendations of the Intercultural Sensitivity Index (OLSON, KROEGER, 2001).

At the preparatory and final stages, a survey was conducted concerning content formation, training organization, extracurricular and independent activities of students. The questions were presented in 2 blocks, containing 25 questions in each. According to the results obtained, the levels of formation and evaluation of the criteria of cultural competence were determined and the effectiveness of the implementation of the methodology during the experiment was analyzed. Subsequently, the calculations showed the percentage of the level of multicultural competence formation and the assessment of the work of teachers - curators, students and tutors taking part in the survey. Students and teachers, who had voluntarily agreed to participate, were involved in the experiment.

The group of researchers prepared all the materials for the questionnaire and adhered to the principles of respect and dignity, privacy of participants. In the educational and methodical complex no measures were applied that would affect the honesty and objectivity of the results and assessments of the experiment's participants.

The role of the teacher in the formation of multicultural competence is represented by measuring the quality of acquired knowledge, improving performance, positive assessments of the participants of the experiment and the presence of stable motivation that meets certain criteria of cultural competence. The level and assessment of cultural competence can be represented by a number of the following criteria.

1. Cognitive criterion presupposes the level of knowledge, skills and abilities in mastering a complex of multicultural contents and ideas. This criterion assumes awareness of the cultural diversity of the world, understanding the meaning of the concepts of "multicultural society", "intercultural communication", motivation to acquire new knowledge on the development of other cultures, their features and focus on effective communication in a multicultural world.

2.  Behavioral criterion shows the level of mastery of behavioral values, attitudes and assessment of the phenomenon of multiculturalism. This is a manifestation of tolerance towards representatives of other cultures, adherence to the principle of equality, respect for human rights, universal values that are common in different cultures. It involves recognition of cultural diversity as a way to develop one's own personality and constant interest in the study of different cultures; motivation to communicate with speakers of different languages and cultures, to be able to identify cultural stereotypes and correctly determine them.

3.  The practical criterion involves the level of ability to interact with representatives of different cultures, using the knowledge and experience gained during training). It centers around active application of speech competence in a foreign language, knowledge and observance of rules and norms of communication adopted in a multicultural society; ability to find and use various sources and tools for learning foreign languages and different cultures, participation in virtual communities, which provides an opportunity for constant intercultural communication, constant communication with the curator, implementation of his recommendations, participation in cultural and educational activities, preparation to participation in international projects. See figure 1, table 1.

Figure 1. Criteria of cultural competence *(author's development)*
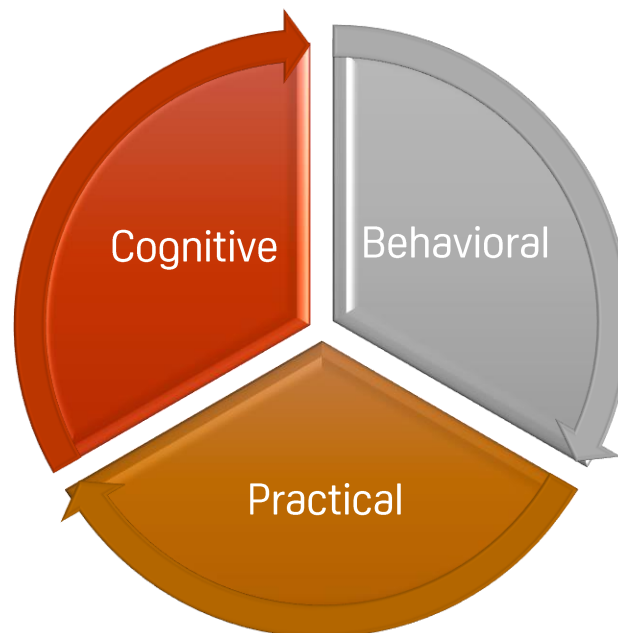


 Source: Search data.

The formation of multicultural competence of the student can be represented as a multilevel scale of assessments: high, medium, low levels.

**Table 1.** Levels of formation and assessment of criteria of cultural competence *(author's development)*

| Criterion | Levels of formation |
|---|---|
| Cognitive (knowledge) | High – the student is motivated to accept and integrate into the multicultural cultural diversity of the world; he knows and understands the meaning of "multicultural society", "intercultural communication"; he prehends that he should constantly improve his knowledge of foreign languages in a multicultural world for his own development and career.<br>Medium – the student is not fully motivated and not ready enough to integrate into a multicultural space; he does not fully accept the cultural diversity of the world; he is not sure in understanding the basic concepts of multiculturalism; he supports stereotypes about other cultures; he has little motivation to learn foreign languages.<br>Low – the student neither prehends nor accepts the multiculturalism of the society and the world; he does not know the meaning of the concepts "multicultural society", "intercultural communication". |
| Behavioral (values, attitudes to multiculturalism) | High – the student accepts universal human values; he is tolerant towards other cultures; he is aware of cultural stereotypes; he is motivated to study different cultures; he understands the need of speaking foreign languages in the modern world, as well as interacting with representatives of different cultures; he prehends that personal and professional development is associated with a multicultural environment, communication.<br>Medium – the student does not fully perceive universal human values and guidelines of intercultural communication; he is not sure that there are cultural stereotypes and a set of rules of intercultural communication that should be followed; he is insufficiently motivated to learn a foreign language and the need to be actively engaged in intercultural communication; he isn't sure that personal and professional development can take place in a multicultural space.<br>Low – the student does not accept universal human values; he does not recognize the need to be tolerant in a multicultural environment; he is unable to carry out successful intercultural communication; he lives in a world of cultural stereotypes; he is not motivated to learn foreign languages. |
| Practical | High – the student actively uses knowledge of foreign languages not only during classes, but also for independent activity; he considers participation in actions and active interaction in group and with the curator as the tool for acquisition of knowledge of multicultural character; he considers it necessary to carry out constant intercultural communication in virtual communities, social networks, etc.; he takes an active part in international projects.<br>Medium – the student occasionally uses virtual channels with intercultural communications; he is not sure about the need to learn foreign languages, the presence of a multicultural component in future professional activities and independent personal development in a multicultural society. He resorts to communication in a foreign language in the virtual space and social networks irregularly and only under the guidance of a curator.<br>Low – the student does not participate in intercultural communication; he does not recognize the multicultural world; he does not listen to the curator's pieces of advice; he neither uses a foreign language nor carries out intercultural communication; he is convinced that knowledge of foreign languages will never be needed in the virtual space and it will not promote his professional and personal development; he does not participate in international projects. |

Source: Search data.

## RESULTS

At the initial stage of the experiment, students were interviewed and their level of multicultural competence and level of foreign language proficiency was determined. A survey of teachers was also conducted on the degree of their involvement in the formation of multicultural competences (see table 2).

**Table 2.** The initial stage. General assessment of the formation of multicultural competence of students *(author's development).*

| № block of questions | | Assessment of the level of competence (%) | | | Number of students in the group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | High | Medium | Low | CG1 | EG2 |
| Block of questions 1 | EG2 | 25 | 60 | 15 | 28 | 25 |
| | CG1 | 23 | 57 | 20 | | |
| Block of questions 2 | EG2 | 28 | 52 | 20 | 28 | 25 |
| | CG1 | 25 | 60 | 15 | | |
| General for the block | EG2 | 57 | 108 | 35 | 53 | |
| | CG1 | 48 | 107 | 30 | | |

Source: Search data.

According to the curriculum, the students of the experimental group are actively studying foreign languages; interactive activities are constantly introduced during their trainings in order to enhance intercultural communication skills with the direct participation of the teacher - curator. Along with this, students are encouraged to actively communicate in a foreign language during the extracurricular period and while implementing work independently.

A group of teachers identified and adjusted the content, methods and approaches to the formation of multicultural competence of students at the university. It should be noted that measuring the level of multicultural competence of students and the readiness of teachers to form such competence is the main indicator monitored during the experiment, the basic factor in testing the studied model for effectiveness.

At the final stage, the results of the survey of teachers and students were analyzed and the influence of the curator's personality on the involvement of students in the process of acquiring multicultural competence was determined (see table 3).

**Table 3.** Evaluation of the effectiveness of the curator's involvement in the formation of multicultural competence by the participants of the experiment *(author's development)*

| Type of activity | Initial stage | | Final stage | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Teachers | Students | Teachers | Students |
| Intensification of foreign language learning under the guidance of a teacher | 64 | 58 | 70 | 67 |
| Studying subjects multicultural orientation | 45 | 56 | 52 | 64 |
| Participation in interactive events organized by a teacher - curator | 38 | 51 | 46 | 63 |

Source: Search data.

Students consider the introduction to the educational process of intensive study of two foreign languages (English and Polish) simultaneously and under the guidance of a teacher as the most effective means of influencing the formation of multicultural competence: from the initial stage to the final stage, assessment increased by 9%. Educators consider the influence of the teacher as the most significant in the process of intensifying the study of foreign languages and the introduction of educational components of a multicultural nature into the curriculum. The students' assessment of the role of the teacher - curator as the organizer of additional extracurricular activities changed the most. Understanding of the importance of the curator's involvement increased by 12% - according to students' assessments and by 8% - according to teachers' assessments.

The final stage of the experiment also involved determining the learning outcomes of students and their evolution, which would confirm the effectiveness of learning foreign languages in terms of active involvement of a multicultural environment, see table 4, table 5.

**Table 4.** Assessment of the quality of students' knowledge of foreign languages and educational components of multicultural orientation *(author's development)*.

| Learning outcomes | Experiment stage | Experimental Group 1 | Control Group 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Minimum score | Initial stage | 6,4 | 6,2 |
| | Final stage | 8,1 | 6,7 |
| Medium score | Initial stage | 8,2 | 8,4 |
| | Final stage | 9,0 | 8,7 |
| Maximum score | Initial stage | 10,2 | 10,3 |
| | Final stage | 11,5 | 11,0 |

Source: Search data.

**Table 5.** The final stage. General assessment of the formation of multicultural competence of students *(author's development)*.

| № block of questions | | Assessment of the level of competence (%) | | | Number of students in the group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | High | Medium | Low | CG1 | EG2 |
| Block of questions 1 | EG2 | 30 | 65 | 5 | 28 | 25 |
| | CG1 | 25 | 59 | 16 | | |
| Block of questions 2 | EG2 | 32 | 48 | 20 | 28 | 25 |
| | CG1 | 26 | 49 | 25 | | |
| General for the block | EG2 | 64 | 113 | 25 | 53 | |
| | CG1 | 51 | 108 | 29 | | |

Source: Search data.

During the experiment, it has been established that teachers influence the learning process and the formation of multicultural competence under the condition of active leadership of foreign language learning, organization of extracurricular students' participation in intercultural communication, constant motivation to learn and communicate. Participants of the experimental group showed better result in testing at the final stage. The level of knowledge acquisition in the experimental group is higher by 7% (high level), by 5% (medium level); less than 4% of low assessments are observed at a low level in the experimental group. The control group showed the following results: 2% more students received a high grade in the first block of questions, 1% more – in the second block of questions.

## DISCUSSION

The institute of curatorship as a part of the policy of a higher educational institution on the formation of multicultural competence needs research attention. The investigations on the formation of cultural competence, social responsibility, the formation of skills of functioning in the civil society has been introduced by a group of Eastern European researchers (POPOVYCH, RAGIMOV, KORNIENKO, IVANOVA, BURYK, 2020; WANG, 2017). Active public position, participation in international projects motivates to learn foreign languages as well as towards active acquisition of professional knowledge and skills (FERNÁNDEZ-MANJÓN, SÁNCHEZ-PÉREZ, GÓMEZ-PULIDO, 2007; NENTHIEN, LOIMA, 2016). The experiment conducted by the author's group has also determined the importance of the teacher's role in intensifying extracurricular activities, involvement in constant intercultural communication, as well as the need for an active position of the teacher in the educational process. We should also consider the personality of the curator, which constantly and comprehensively influences the formation of multicultural competence of the student in general.

The investigation of multilingual groups and the features of their study of foreign languages involves constant work on the formation of multicultural competence in students' communities. It reflects the process of developing professional competences as defined by ACPA and NASPA (2015) and offers a valuable approach to effectively addressing increasingly complex multicultural issues in higher educational institutions (CHATTERTON, GODDARD, 2000; SYNORUB, MEDYNSKA, 2019). In fact, the experimental study has confirmed the need to

motivate students towards learning foreign languages through the creation of a favorable and creative atmosphere by the teacher during the learning process and outside the classroom. The active educational position of the teacher is important for the formation of students' multicultural competence; it should be represented in the work of the teacher and curator. It influences the formation of multicultural awareness of students. In prospect, one should take into account the importance of the teacher's active involvement in the educational process and extracurricular activities of students. Activity in the development of methods of students' adaptation in a multicultural environment dictates the need to determine the prospects for the further development of the global education system, the invention of tools and strategies for creating inclusive and harmonious students' communities, effective methods of fostering tolerance within university education.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the course of the experiment, it has been established that the active position of the teacher in the process of teaching students, motivation and curatorial activities in extracurricular time contributes to the formation of multicultural competence. All the above mentioned stimulates educating a tolerant, highly qualified specialist who can work in a globalized world.

In general, the formation of multicultural competence in the university space will provide quality and comprehensive education necessary for training of modern professionals. An important role in this process should be given to teachers. All participants in the educational process should constantly work on the implementation of the philosophy of multiculturalism. For the effective work of the teacher, it is essential to constantly work on measures to internationalize education and science, and, under the support of the administration, moving towards the introduction of intercultural learning. The modern educator should adhere to the standards of intercultural communication and monitor the implementation of such a policy for students. The great importance of the teacher's work in the mainstream of the formation of intercultural competence lies in the regular and constant integration of students into the multicultural modern environment.

The prospect for further investigation is the continuation of experimental research to help teachers and administrators of HEIs work in a multicultural space in order to facilitate the process of adaptation of students to learning in a multicultural environment.

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