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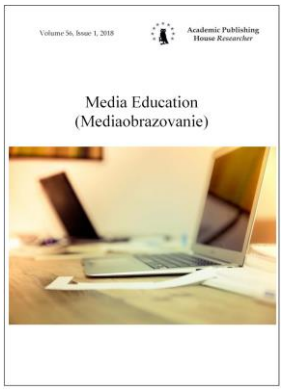

Interethnic Tolerance among University Students in the Context of Contemporary Russian and Foreign Media Education

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Abstract

Development of interethnic tolerance, teaching a respectful attitude towards representatives of other ethnic groups and nationalities, their cultures, customs and traditions is an actual problem of modern society, and the solution to this problem largely determines the nature of intercultural communication. Therefore, the problem of educating the youth audience in matters of interethnic tolerance is acquiring particular importance. The article analyzes the issues of interethnic tolerance of the student audience from the point of view of identifying the main prospects for media education in the context of modern education reforming. The authors come to the conclusion that the experience of Russian and foreign media educators to promote interethnic tolerance among students can help the younger generation develop an independent and conscious respect, trust and a peaceful attitude towards other nations based on constructive dialogue, non-violent interaction and opportunities for intercultural exchange. The main prospects for increasing students' interethnic tolerance in the media educational context are related to analysis of the sociocultural and theoretical-pedagogical base of interethnic tolerance in contemporary conditions; a comparative analysis of up-to-date methods, forms, technologies and approaches of Russian and foreign media education models aimed at enhancing interethnic tolerance among university students; identifying prioritized theoretical and methodological approaches to promoting interethnic tolerance characteristic of the present-day interethnic society, integration and transformation aspects of developing interethnic consciousness in modern society; inventing new forms and methods aimed at fostering interethnic tolerance among the younger generation and reducing media risks associated with extremist orientation.

Keywords: interethnic tolerance, university students, media education, mass media, media culture, media safety, English-speaking countries, ethnic diversity, intercultural communication, dialogue of cultures.

1. Introduction

The urgency of using potential media education opportunities in increasing students' interethnic tolerance in Russian and foreign media education models is due to the ever-growing interest of young people in media culture (television, the press, cinema, the Internet, etc.), a significant influence of modern world mass media on life priorities and interests of young people, as well as the enormous possibilities that media education offers for promoting analytical thinking skills, social adaptation of young people in a rapidly growing information flow.

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Mass media act as a filter that selects, composes and interprets information, takes on educational and educational functions. They are a kind of "parallel school" that exerts a tremendous influence on social, cultural, moral guidelines and values of contemporary society. Information transmitted through mass media has become a "product" of the consciousness industry in modern conditions, but at the same time, it is not always comprehensive and reliable, therefore, it requires independent thinking and critical assessment.

Reforming and modernizing of modern Russian education, searching for new methods, technologies and techniques of the educational process in the work with the younger generation, presented in Russian and foreign pedagogical science, are constantly updated.

Hence, we need to appeal to the experience of media education and developing interethnic culture abroad, in particular, in English-speaking countries with a high proportion of migrants where children are taught interethnic tolerance from early preschool age (Derman-Sparks, Edwards, 2009), and then they continue studying social and cultural tolerance at school (Bullard, 1997; Burkholder, 2011; Burns Coleman, 2011; Dismondy, 2015; Hamburg, 2004) and at universities (Franklin, 2013; Hurtado, Ponjuan, 2005; Kivisto, Ng, 2005; Thompson, 2014).

In addition, public interest in media education issues concerning television, radio, cinema, the press and the Internet has significantly increased in recent decades. Therefore, intensification of this process connected with the active expansion of the Internet, communication networks and growing media threats associated with extremism, terrorism calls for ensuring students' media safety.

2. Materials and methods

The main methodological principles of the study are:

– unity of theory and practice in the study of interethnic tolerance;

– creative, historical approaches to the problem under study based on objectivity and comprehensiveness of studying socio-pedagogical processes and phenomena, an integrated approach to the problem (including interrelationships of the processes under study, consideration of external effects, etc.)

– a systematic approach to objects under study including personal, pragmatist, axiological, ethnopedagogical, polysubjective, prognostic, reflexive and other aspects.

The key media education theories (aesthetic, sociocultural, development of critical thinking skills, semiotic, etc.) which are most prevalent in Russia and abroad at the present stage form the basis for the comparative analysis of interethnic tolerance among university students.

We use the following methods: information acquisition and analysis of abstracts, monographs, scientific articles and reports concerning the research theme; analysis of scientific literature relevant to the study; theoretical analysis and synthesis; generalization and classification and content analysis.

3. Discussion

Life of the modern generation is closely connected with communication and information media and this fact actualizes the need to develop their analytical skills, independent thinking and safe strategies of existence in the media space. The issues of interethnic tolerance acquire particular urgency in working with university students including representatives of various ethnic groups living in the Russian Federation, taking into account their personal social views and level of interethnic culture.

Different aspects of media education of school and university students are reflected in the works written by Russian (Baranov, 2002, 2004; Bondarenko, 2009; Chelysheva, 2016; Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2017; Fedorov, 2011; 2015; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2016; Gaidareva, 2002; Kirillova, 1992; Mikhaleva, 2016; 2018; Penzin, 2004; Polichko, 2006; Sharikov, 2014; Spitchkin, 1999; Usov, 1995; Weisfeld, 1982) and foreign researchers (Bachmair, 1997; Bazalgette, 1992; 2008; Bryant, Thompson, 2002; Buckingham, 2000; 2003; 2004; Considine, 1999; Gálik, Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2015; Goodman, 2003; Kačinová, 2018; Livingstone, Haddon, 2009; Masterman, 1985; 1997; Petranová et al., 2017).

For instance, Russian media experts such as O.A. Baranov, S.N. Penzin and Y.N. Usov addressed the issues of youth media education on the basis of screen arts (Baranov, 2002, 2004;

Penzin, 2004; Usov, 1995). G.A. Polichko described possibilities of media education integrated with the arts, studying the language of screen media production (Polichko, 2006). N.B. Kirillova highlighted the culture studies in media education and media culture at the present stage (Kirillova, 1992). I.N. Gaidareva devoted her work to researching the socio-cultural environment as a factor developing information culture of an individual (Gaidareva, 2002).

A.V. Sharikov analyzed the sociological aspects of media culture and media education (Sharikov, 2014). A.V. Fedorov's works are devoted to fostering university students' critical thinking skills and media competence, the current state of media education in Russia and foreign countries (Fedorov, 2011; 2015; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2016).

Various aspects of youth media education abroad are also analyzed by A.V. Fedorov, A.A. Levitskaya, V.L. Kolesnichenko, G.V. Mikhaleva and others (Fedorov, 2008; Levitskaya, 2015; Kolesnichenko, 2007; Mikhaleva, 2015, etc.). Some Russian studies, in particular, reflected the influence of British media education on Russian media education (Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2015).

A great number of foreign publications are devoted to interethnic tolerance: history of combating various forms and manifestations of intolerance in the USA, Canada, Great Britain and other European countries; contemporary academic and cultural assimilation of immigrants and refugees; history of multiculturalism and transnationalism (Carnes, 1999; Hogarth, Fletcher, 2018; Kafka, 2013; Kivisto, Ng, 2005; Li, 1999; Mason, 2000; Wallis, Fleras, 2009); present-day racial prejudices and bias (Carbado, Gulati, 2018); ethnic, national or religious discrimination (Herman, 2011). For example, K. Perry told about modern racial policies and civil rights of "black Britons" in the twentieth century Great Britain in the context of the empire and transnational racial policies of the state in the monograph "London is the Place for Me" (Perry, 2016).

Of particular interest, in our opinion, is a historical overview of racial tolerance and ethnic tolerance in American schools of 1900-1954 (Burkholder, 2011) which reveals the history of early antiracist activism among a coalition of teachers, academics and politicians who believed that schools could be used as major sites of mitigating unwanted racial prejudice in America. It also tells about how teachers explained racial diversity to schoolchildren long before school desegregation.

Foreign scholars consider the issues of ethnic tolerance and cultural diversity in different contexts, mainly, state-pragmatic, political and ideological: racial and ethnic pluralism in the student environment as a facilitator of industrial and economic prosperity of the country (Alesina, La Ferrara, 2005; Easterly, 2001; Florida, Gates, 2003; Ottaviano, Peri, 2006); in higher education as a factor of innovation growth and creative potential of future specialists: "Student racial and ethnic diversity in higher education is an important and timely topic, as institutions, policy-makers, and economists increasingly recognize the value that accrues at many levels of having a skilled and diverse student body and workforce. Students benefit from learning in a diverse environment; firms may benefit from a diverse workforce; and more demographically diverse regions make experience higher rates of economic growth" (Franklin, 2013: 30).

A number of modern researchers emphasize the urgent need and importance of creating "a positive campus climate in universities with diverse student bodies" (Arbona, Jimenez, 2014: 167). Various social initiatives for working with ethnic university groups are proposed and analyzed. Campus diversity initiatives traditionally include integration of diversity into the curriculum, co-curricular initiatives (student organizations, intergroup dialogues), community outreach and integrative activities such as service-learning and living-learning programs. Further research is also needed "to examine the effects of these initiatives in ethnic minority students' perceptions of the campus climate and their college and psychological adjustment" (Arbona, Jimenez, 2014: 168). It is possible that "academic concerns and depression have a reciprocal relation: academic achievement concerns may lead to depression symptoms, which, in turn, may lead to lower achievement and further demoralization feelings" (Hurtado et al., 2008).

In this connection, a scientific review of European researchers on the positive impact of education on increasing interethnic tolerance is also interesting (Hagendoorn, Nekuee, 2018). According to the authors, education is crucial in all countries surveyed and contributes to more tolerant views on ethnic and national minorities in Western Europe, Poland and the United States. The positive effects of education, however, do not always help to overcome the negative influence of personal bias and conservative ethnic prejudices: the negative effects of less formal education may be reinforced by economical competition of ethnic minorities. Thus, formal education alone is insufficient to alter prejudiced views and opinions. Other forms of transmitting social values leading to open-mindedness should support the positive effects of formal education as well.

On the other hand, present-day English-language mass media are replete with sharp publications about inciting racial hatred and "zero tolerance" towards immigrants. Here are some headlines of articles from *the Guardian*: "Ethnic minority students less likely to win university places", "Racist incidents at universities show they aren't as tolerant as we think", "Universities brushing racism under the carpet, students say…", etc.

American researchers do realize that the popular press and mass media educate more people about issues regarding ethnicity and race than all other sources of education available to U.S. citizens. That is why they have long spoken about the threat of the so-called "ethnic and cultural war" (Macedo, Bartolomé, 1999) as well as about the influence of the ideology that determines social, cultural and political discourse. Discussing social complexities including ethnic cleansing, culture wars, hegemony, human sufferings, and xenophobia, D. Macedo and Lilia I. Bartolomé explain why it is essential that we should appreciate what it means to educate for critical citizenry in the ever-growing multiracial and multicultural world.

In addition, the very concept of "tolerance" is being transformed and reconsidered in contemporaneous scientific literature. For example, in the monograph "The Intolerance of Tolerance" by D.A. Carson (Carson, 2013) the contemporary understanding of tolerance is questioned: he traces a subtle but enormous shift in the way we began to understand tolerance over recent years – from protecting the rights of those who hold different beliefs to asserting all beliefs as equally valid and correct. He also looks back at the history of this shift and discusses its significance for culture today, its influence on democracy, discussions about good and evil. At the same time, D.A. Carson argues not only that the "new tolerance" is socially dangerous and exhausts the mind but also leads to genuine intolerance towards all who are struggling to defend their beliefs.

Some researchers try to understand the essence of genuine tolerance and interpret it as an ability to live among ethnocultural differences that we cannot endorse or as a "virtue" that allows us to accept: beliefs that we consider false; actions that we consider unfair; institutional arrangements that we consider cruel or corrupt; and people who embody what we confront (Bowlin, 2016). Others, on the contrary, provide convincing arguments for the so-called "conditional tolerance" which requires us to constantly discuss and reflect on the limits of what we are willing to endure or tolerate (Davids, Waghid, 2017).

We are especially interested in the challenges of educating children and young people in matters of interethnic tolerance. The issues of preventing hate and violence among adolescents and young people in schools and universities is of particular relevance in modern English-language studies (Hamburg, 2004).

A large number of English-language publications are devoted to teaching tolerance to children and young people in educational institutions. At the same time, they are focused on different target audiences (schoolchildren, university students, school and university teachers) and are designed to teach how to overcome and eliminate interethnic barriers and prejudices, disinformation and bias (Black, 2016; Bullard, 1997; Burns Coleman, White, 2011; Derman-Sparks, Edwards, 2009; Thompson, 2014; Vogt, 1997). These publications analyze the nature and consequences of interethnic and racial intolerance, for example, real stories of adolescents who tell about their experience in confronting various prejudices in such areas as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, appearance, and social class (Webber, Mandel, 2008).

Some issues of interethnic tolerance among the younger generation in the media educational context are partially presented in the works of western scientists (Andersen et al., 1999; Bachmair, 1997; Bryant, Thompson, 2002; Buckingham, 2000; 2003; 2004; Masterman, 1985; 1997; Pungente, O'Malley, 1999; Rushkoff, 2002).

Among the first researchers to address the challenges of developing the aesthetic theory of screen education were F.K. Stewart and J. Nuttall (Stewart, Nuttall, 1969). Later, L. Masterman identified basic principles of critical analysis of media texts and critical autonomy of an individual (Masterman, 1985; 1997).

B. Bachmaier and D. Buckingham devoted a number of their researches to analysis of methodological principles of media education (Bachmair, 1997; Buckingham, 2000; 2003; 2004); J. Bryant and S. Thompson, D. Rushkoff analyzed media impact mechanisms on the audience and media communication challenges (Bryant, Thompson, 2002; Rushkoff, 2002). Studies by B. Duncan, N. Andersen, J.J. Pungente and M. O'Malley are devoted to the genesis of world's media education and its current state (Andersen et al., 1999; Duncan et al., 2007; Pungente &

O'Malley, 1999). R. Hobbs and D.C. Moore studied the effects of television and cinema on children and young people and considered screen media texts as an important factor in raising the level of media culture of the younger generation (Hobbs, 2007; Hobbs, Moore, 2013).

J.J. Pungente and M. O'Malley actively promoted the development and implementation of media education in secondary schools in Canada (Pungente, O'Malley, 1999). Researcher and media educator B. Duncan wrote manuals on developing schoolchildren's media literacy based on the aesthetic and educational potential of screen arts (Duncan et al., 2007). A.H. Caron is studying practical media education of children and youth (Caron, 2008).

However, until now, Russian and foreign researches have not presented any analysis of sociocultural, theoretical theories, pedagogical conditions and mechanisms that determine the nature and perspectives of studying and reflecting on raising students' interethnic tolerance in the context of Russian and foreign (English-language) media education in the post-Soviet period including major trends, forms and methods of using media education potential in solving this socially significant problem.

4. Results

The analysis of the issues under study allowed us to reveal a contradiction that has developed in connection with the exacerbation of interethnic relations among young people in the modern sociocultural situation and the insufficient use of media education possibilities in addressing this important social problem. The issues of promoting interethnic tolerance acquire particular urgency in educating the younger generation in terms of interethnic awareness and culture.

In this regard, it seems necessary to turn to theoretical, political, cultural and sociocultural aspects of interethnic tolerance, identifying the main prospects for promoting interethnic tolerance among university students in a media education context.

Hence, one of the leading research challenges is further defining of media education prospects for promoting young people' interethnic tolerance represented in modern Russian and foreign media education models. It is necessary to identify priority theoretical and methodological approaches to interethnic tolerance, features characteristic of the modern interethnic society, integration and transformation aspects related to developing interethnic consciousness in the contemporary Russian society; determine personal views of present-day university students regarding peace and respect for the history, culture and traditions of other nations and ethnic groups.

In addition, a theoretical analysis of using media education potential including forms and methods aimed at promoting interethnic tolerance among the younger generation and decreasing media risks associated with extremist manifestations among young people acquires particular importance at the present stage.

The global and interactive communication system, a wide penetration of mass media and information into the life of all social groups call for developing students' analytical skills, independent and critical thinking skills in understanding the problem of building positive and good neighborly relations with numerous ethnic groups living in the modern multicultural environment.

The experience of Russian and foreign media educators to promote interethnic tolerance among students can help the young generation develop an independent and conscious respect, trust and a peaceful attitude towards other nations based on constructive dialogue, non-violent interaction and opportunities for intercultural exchange.

The perspective objectives within the framework of this problem are the following: 1) analysis of sociocultural, theoretical and educational aspects of interethnic tolerance in modern conditions; 2) analysis of approaches to Russian and foreign media education (in English-speaking countries); 3) a comparative analysis and systematization of the research material under study (methods, forms, technologies and approaches to media education) aimed at promoting students' interethnic tolerance in Russia and abroad; 4) synthesis of key media education models for increasing interethnic tolerance among young people on the basis of a comparative analysis.

5. Conclusion

Development of interethnic tolerance, teaching young people a respectful attitude towards representatives of other ethnic groups and nationalities, their cultures, customs and traditions is an actual problem of modern society, and the solution to this problem largely determines the nature of intercultural communication.

Hence, the challenges of educating the youth audience in matters of interethnic tolerance are acquiring particular importance, for example, in order to prevent intolerance and violence among adolescents and young people in schools and universities.

Promotion of interethnic tolerance in the system of higher education, development of students' personal social views, the level of their interethnic culture, readiness for a dialogue of cultures will largely determine how further relations with representatives of different nationalities, ethnic groups and cultures will develop in the youth environment.

The concept of "tolerance" is interpreted ambiguously and undergoes some transformation and rethinking in modern scientific literature. For example, some researchers consider ethnic tolerance and cultural diversity mainly in the state-pragmatic, political and ideological aspects: racial and ethnic pluralism in the student environment serves as a factor of industrial and economic prosperity of the country based on intercultural exchange.

In recent decades, public interest in the challenges of media education has significantly increased. The intensification of this process is observed due to the active introduction of the Internet, communication networks and the increasing media threat associated with manifestations of extremism and terrorism. As a result, there is a call for ensuring media safety for young people. In this regard, it is necessary to appeal to the Russian and foreign experience of media education as a means of developing analytical skills, independent and critical thinking skills, media competence and media culture, social competence, intercultural and interethnic tolerance of young people.

The experience of Russian and foreign media educators to develop interethnic tolerance among students can help the younger generation develop an independent and conscious respect, trust and a peaceful attitude towards other nations based on constructive dialogue, non-violent interaction and opportunities for intercultural exchange.

The main prospects for developing students' interethnic tolerance in the media educational context are related to 1) analysis of the sociocultural and theoretical-pedagogical base of interethnic tolerance in contemporary conditions; 2) a comparative analysis of up-to-date methods, forms, technologies and approaches of Russian and foreign media education models aimed at increasing interethnic tolerance among university students; 3) identifying prioritized theoretical and methodological approaches to promoting interethnic tolerance characteristic of the present-day interethnic society, integration and transformation aspects related to developing interethnic consciousness in modern society; 4) inventing new forms and methods aimed at fostering interethnic tolerance among the younger generation and reducing media risks associated with extremist orientation.

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