

Intercultural adaptation of students in a foreign language and multicultural society of a metropolis

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Abstract. Theoretical and practical development of the problem of students' adaptation in a foreign language and multicultural society is one of the key problems of the academic mobility development of the individual throughout life. The need to solve this problem is determined by the socio-cultural dynamics of education development in the context of its global shifts, transformations, and systemic changes. The purpose of the article is to conduct a theoretical analysis of the problem of students' adaptation in the foreign language and multicultural society of the metropolis. The article deals with the problem of cross-cultural adaptation of foreign students in Russian universities to the foreign language and multicultural social medium of the metropolis. The phenomenon of cross-cultural adaptation is studied on an interdisciplinary basis. The authors consider the theoretical approaches to the study of various aspects of cross-cultural adaptation of a person to a foreign language and multicultural society, as well as analyze the educational opportunities and potential of intercultural interaction based on the dialogue of cultures as a mechanism underlying the process of adaptation of students in the foreign language and multicultural society of the metropolis. According to the authors, the success of foreign students' education is also determined by their readiness to accept the entire cultural diversity of the foreign-speaking world and foreign language culture, as well as their tolerant attitude toward them. The article highlights and characterizes the main directions and specific content of students' adaptation to foreign language and multicultural society. The authors conclude that cross-cultural adaptation can be an effective way for foreign students to enter the new socio-cultural conditions of the foreign language and multicultural society of the metropolis.

Keywords: academic mobility, educational migration, foreign language society, intercultural interaction.

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1 Introduction

The relevance of the problem of theoretical and practical development of the students' adaptation problem in a foreign language and multicultural society is determined by the specifics of the socio-cultural dynamics of education development in the context of its global shifts, transformations, and systemic changes. The contemporary state policy of the metropolitan area in the field of education for the period up to 2025 considers the expansion of social, cultural, and educational opportunities of the metropolis in the development of academic mobility of young people. In these conditions, the problem of intercultural adaptation of university students to a foreign language and multicultural society that has its own specifics in the metropolis is significantly updated.

The mainstays of the process of personal adaptation to a foreign language and multicultural society were developed by N.V. Baryshnikov [1], V.V. Safonova [2], A.N. Utekhina [3], and other Russian researchers. This problem is also widely presented in the research of foreign scientists [L. E. Anderson [4], J. M. Bennett [5], Y.Y. Kim [6], I. Pietilä [7], Sh. Fakir [8], etc.].

2 Methods

The used methods include the following:

- Theoretical analysis of literature and special studies, which provide a conceptual justification for the intercultural adaptation of students to a foreign language and multicultural society as a pedagogically appropriate process;
- Analysis of the current legislative and regulatory framework of the Russian Federation and the city of Moscow on the issue of increasing the export potential of the education sector;
- Analysis of the experience in organizing the adaptation process of students to the foreign language and multicultural society of the metropolis in Moscow universities.

3 Results

Theoretical and practical development at the interdisciplinary level of the problem of students' adaptation in a foreign language and multicultural society is one of the key problems of the development of academic mobility of individuals throughout their life. It is widely represented in fundamental and applied research and writings of many well-known representatives of the world scientific community, including leading Russian scientists [D.S. Likhachev, V.S. Bibler, A.A. Guseynov, A.S. Zapesotsky, M.S. Kagan, I.T. Kasavin, V.A. Lectorsky, V.M. Mezhujev [9], A.V. Smirnov, V.S. Stepin, A.D. Ursul, and others].

The philosophical, methodological, and theoretical basis of the research on a phenomenon of individual's adaptation to foreign language and multicultural society is the scientific conception of the civilization and culture dialectic as the reflection of the interrelated and interdependent processes of civilizational and socio-cultural development of society transforming in the context of globalization into a post-industrial society based on knowledge and innovation.

In this sense, the education sector, as the most important socio-cultural institution of society, is no exception. Current changes in the mission, values, and meanings, socio-cultural image, and education landscape are determined at present and in the future by many factors, including increased competition in the domestic and global markets of cultural and educational services, which, in turn, causes the problem of exporting this category of services.

The latter circumstance is of fundamental importance in the context of the educational services market developing in the Russian Federation and the state strategies for developing the export potential of the national education system.

The project on “Development of the export potential of the Russian education system”, currently being implemented in Russia, is designed for the period from May 2017 to November 2025. The most important strategy of the federal project on developing the export potential of the education system in Russia for the period up to 2025 is to increase the awareness and brand status of Russian education in the international educational market [9].

According to the forecast, the number of foreign citizens studying full-time in Russian educational institutions of secondary vocational and higher education for the period up to 2025 should increase from 200 to 710 thousand people, including students getting state scholarships – up to 15 thousand people, studying on additional educational programs – up to 290 thousand people, studying under contract – from 135 to 405 thousand people [9]. Currently, the proportion of foreign students in Russian universities amounts to 7.88%, and in the system of secondary vocational education – to 1.26%. The most popular areas of training are medicine, economics, management, Russian and foreign languages, and humanities.

According to the results of the authors’ survey of 164 foreign students studying at Moscow universities, the following reasons for educational migration were noted:

- the high quality of education – 78% (118 people);
 - the high prestige of the Russian diploma of higher education in their native country – 75% (123 people);
 - advice and recommendations of parents, relatives, acquaintances, and friends (including those who had previous successful experience of studying at Soviet and Russian universities; in some countries, parents’ recommendations were mandatory) – 70% (115 people);
 - relatively low cost of education compared to other countries – 69% (113 people);
 - comfortable living and a fairly high level of personal security in the urban environment – 69% (113 people);
 - the proximity of cultures, traditions, language (including knowledge of Russian) – 57% (93 people);
 - the possibility of additional employment (employment during training) – 56% (92 people);
 - relatives, friends, acquaintances lived in Moscow – 36% (59 people);
 - random choice – 24% (39 people);
 - the ability to study on a state budget basis – 19% (31 people),
 - other reasons – 8% (13 people).
- Thus, among the leading reasons for foreign students to choose Moscow universities are:
- high quality of higher education;
 - high prestige of the Russian diploma on higher education in their native country;
 - advice and recommendations of parents, relatives, acquaintances, and friends, including those who had successful experience of studying in Soviet and Russian universities;
 - low cost of education; as well as the comfort of living and safety of the urban environment.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that only 24% of respondents believed that they made a completely random choice.

The project on “Development of the export potential of the Russian education system” (2017-2025) provides for the development and implementation in state universities of Russia, starting from 2021, of the target model of the university's activities for the export of education. Much attention will be paid to improving the content and technologies of adaptation of foreign students to a foreign language social medium (currently, in the vast

majority of Russian universities, this aspect of educational activities with foreign students does not have a holistic, systematic nature).

Cross-cultural adaptation is a complex “process of an individual entering a new culture, gradually mastering its norms, values, and behavior patterns. At the same time, true adaptation involves achieving social and psychological integration with another culture without losing the riches of its own” [10].

According to the results of the conducted survey, the most difficult thing for foreign first-year students is to adapt to a new lifestyle in the Russian metropolitan area and the need for constant communication in Russian – 69.5% (114 people); to adapt to new climatic conditions – 48.8% (80 people), the absence of family and friends – 46.3% (76 people), which together indicates the presence of “a foreign student syndrome” (L. Uardu) and, accordingly, the need to provide special psychological and pedagogical support for first-year students in the context of their intercultural adaptation based on intercultural interaction (communication), and a dialogue of cultures.

4 Discussion

The results of the conducted research have allowed concluding that the metropolitan area has the necessary and sufficient conditions for cross-cultural adaptation of foreign students to a foreign language and multicultural social medium.

At the same time, it is necessary to search for new, better adaptation mechanisms. As Utekhina emphasizes, the specificity of adaptation technology is determined by the need to “identify the universal human features based on comparing foreign and native cultures that combine intercultural dialogue and social interaction in their content” [11].

It is also obvious that the success of a foreign students’ education is also determined by their readiness to accept the entire cultural diversity of the foreign-speaking world and foreign language culture. As noted by Baryshnikov, Utekhina, Safonova, and other researchers, it is revealed in both the tolerance to various manifestations of foreign cultural values and the ability to work constructively with representatives of foreign cultures through culture-based dialogue (polylogue), partnership, and mutual respect: “the success and effectiveness of cross-cultural interaction are directly related to the problem of human adaptation to foreign cultural social medium and constructive interaction with people from different cultures” [11].

5 Conclusion

Intercultural adaptation is a complex psychological and pedagogical phenomenon. Its essence reflects the process of integration of foreign students into a foreign language and multicultural society. The successful process of intercultural adaptation assumes as necessary and sufficient conditions that students have high motivation for educational and professional activities, as well as social intercultural interaction in a foreign language society based on the active generation and assignment of new values and meanings of the students’ life in a new foreign language and multicultural society.

The main areas of adaptation activities in the course of psychological and pedagogical support for foreign students at higher education institutions of the capital region should be focused on the implementation of the following areas of adaptation activities:

- developing social and everyday skills of foreign students and training in social orientation in a foreign language society;

- studying difficulties of foreign students in cross-cultural interaction in a foreign language society and developing individual programs to overcome them based on pedagogical support and assistance;
- developing and extending foreign students' ideas about the mentality and national character of native speakers of foreign language culture;
- developing cultural awareness of foreign students (historical conditionality of manifestations of foreign language culture, traditions, customs, etiquette, habits, and norms of communication, etc.; knowing cultural values of foreign language society; specific behavior patterns of people who are carriers of foreign language culture; specific means of nonverbal communication);
- developing the ability to analyze and interpret the manifestations of foreign language culture;
- developing ethnic tolerance, adaptability, interactivity, the experience of emotional and sensory perception of foreign language culture;
- mastering the ways of effective interaction with representatives of foreign language society.

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