Intercultural competence of teachers: training and development in the modern educational context

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Abstract. In the contemporary educational landscape, the concept of intercultural competence among teachers has garnered significant attention due to the increasingly multicultural nature of societies worldwide. This abstract explores the training and development of intercultural competence among teachers within the modern educational context. It examines the theoretical foundations of intercultural competence, emphasizing its relevance in fostering effective communication and understanding across diverse cultural backgrounds. The abstract reviews current practices and strategies employed in the training of teachers to enhance their intercultural competence, including experiential learning, cultural immersion programs, and pedagogical approaches that promote cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, it discusses the challenges and opportunities faced in integrating intercultural competence into teacher education curricula. The abstract concludes by highlighting the importance of continuous professional development and institutional support in equipping teachers with the necessary skills to navigate and thrive in multicultural educational environments.

1 Introduction

In the era of globalization, the dynamic interaction between culturally diverse communities has become paramount for fostering mutual understanding among people. The significance of nurturing intercultural competence in future teachers has grown substantially, as this breadth of experience is pivotal for enriching dialogues and devising innovative approaches to advancing global societal development.

In Russia, the framework of teacher education, aligned with European agreements under the Bologna process, aims to promote students' mobility within domestic universities to explore global cultures. This mobility is crucial for future teachers to enhance their educational practices by integrating insights gleaned from diverse cultural norms, thereby transforming pedagogical realities thoughtfully and effectively. It is essential to overcome instances where future teachers mechanically adopt foreign cultural norms and uncritically impose stereotypes in their interactions with students. This necessitates accumulating robust

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intercultural competence, as the diversity within such competence shapes how effectively teachers transmit humanity's accumulated cultural richness to their students.

The ability to address challenges stemming from intercultural interactions is at the heart of intercultural competence. Without a solid experiential foundation, it is impossible to achieve practical and impactful results in intercultural settings. Therefore, developing this competence is crucial for future teachers, who must navigate and guide students through complex intercultural scenarios.

Pedagogical science has yet to fully delve into the theoretical and technological processes involved in developing intercultural competence among future teachers. Current research mainly focuses on how educational subjects perceive and incorporate fundamental aspects of foreign cultures into their personal development. It does not adequately link this process with other essential competencies, such as linguistic, pedagogical, disciplinary, social, and self-competence. The conceptual framework for understanding how intercultural competence is formed in future teachers remains underdeveloped, hindering its effective integration into teacher education programs.

A strategic approach to cultivating intercultural competence in future teachers has not been clearly articulated. Present educational content often emphasizes activities, creative expression, and emotional-value relationships, rather than a cohesive strategy for developing intercultural competence. Theoretical analysis and synthesis of teaching practices indicate that traditional views of pedagogical interaction as a one-sided impact on students result in widening informational and communicative gaps between teachers and students, deviating from established pedagogical standards, and isolating higher education from contemporary global cultural dynamics.

To address these challenges, it is essential to develop a comprehensive system of pedagogical interaction that actively promotes the formation of intercultural competence in future teachers. This system should integrate a clear strategy, detailed conceptual framework, and cohesive educational practices that align with global cultural imperatives and prepare teachers to effectively guide students in a multicultural world.

2 Materials and methods

There is an urgent need to clarify the theoretical and methodological foundations for developing intercultural competence in future teachers through pedagogical interaction and to construct a comprehensive structural and functional model. Current models for fostering intercultural competence in future educators do not meet essential requirements such as clarity, coherence, manageability, effectiveness, and reproducibility. It is crucial to identify the key components—goals, structure, content, processes, and outcomes—and establish standardized criteria and indicators for each stage of developing intercultural competence in future teachers.

Analysis of pedagogical theory and practice reveals several contradictions in the process of developing intercultural competence among future teachers. First, while Russian society is increasingly integrated into the global political, economic, and cultural spheres, the actual content and forms of intercultural interaction between Russian citizens and foreigners lag behind. Second, social tensions arising from intercultural interactions contrast with the need to promote academic mobility among Russian university students to enhance their intercultural competence. Third, there is a discrepancy between the necessity for objective assessments of future teachers' intercultural competence and the insufficient development of systematic evaluation criteria and indicators. Fourth, the stages of developing intercultural competence in future teachers are weakly validated in terms of their connection to specific types of pedagogical interactions. Finally, existing theories and practices aimed at enhancing intercultural competence often do not align effectively with current pedagogical systems.
Addressing these contradictions requires refining the theoretical and methodological approaches to developing intercultural competence in future teachers. This involves aligning educational goals with global integration imperatives, reducing social tensions through effective intercultural educational strategies, establishing robust frameworks for assessing intercultural competence, validating developmental stages with appropriate pedagogical interactions, and harmonizing theoretical insights with practical applications in educational settings.

3 Results and Discussion

An analysis of state educational standards and humanities curricula reveals that these disciplines are currently inadequate in equipping students with the skills necessary for effective communication and appropriate behavior in intercultural settings. This inadequacy manifests as hesitation, inability to assert oneself, and improper reactions to received information. Several factors contribute to this issue: the absence of specialized courses on intercultural communication in non-linguistic universities and programs; the lack of integration of cultural studies into professional training; and the theoretical, rather than practical, nature of humanities education, which fails to develop essential communication skills and intercultural competencies. Additionally, there is insufficient emphasis on the sociocultural aspects of foreign language education, leading to professional discourse being taught without adequate consideration of intercultural norms and values.

Addressing the challenge of intercultural interaction necessitates a revision of state educational standards, especially as Russia integrates into the European educational space, which demands uniform international criteria for professional training. The competency-based approach is gaining prominence in education, aiming to predict and enhance the social and professional behavior of future specialists, ensuring their mobility and competitiveness. Therefore, developing intercultural competence reflects the societal need to train specialists who are adept at navigating intercultural environments, with competence serving as a pivotal attribute for personal and societal advancement.

In teaching intercultural interaction, personal experience in communication is crucial. Selecting pedagogical methods that facilitate this learning is vital. The psychological and pedagogical aspects of communication highlight that each phase of joint activity involves dynamic situations that require specific actions (Yu. Khanin). Since teaching foreign language communication at the university level is professionally oriented, learning scenarios should be contextually professional. These situations act as conduits for cultural transmission, allowing students to gain and comprehend personal experiences fundamental to forming intercultural competence. An interactive learning approach can simulate real-life professional activities, encouraging interpersonal interaction and better preparing students for intercultural contexts.

Research on developing intercultural competence through professionally oriented foreign language communication covers various areas. Scholars such as N.I. Almazova, N.D. Galskova, V.G. Kostomarova, and others have explored the content, forms, and methods of intercultural learning. The professional training of specialists within a student-oriented language education paradigm has been examined by M.A. Akopova, B.S. Gershunsky, E.F. Zeera, and others. Theories of contextual learning (S.I. Arkhangelsky, A.A. Verbitsky, P.I. Obraztsov) and situational approaches (M.L. Weisburd, B.L. Skalkin, M.L. Frumkin) provide frameworks for organizing training that simulates professionally significant activities. Furthermore, theoretical and practical developments in game-based learning (P.C. Alpatova, A.O. Budarina, M.A. Domozhirova, and others) offer students the opportunity to acquire professionally significant experience through interactive activities.
The development of a future teacher's intercultural competence within pedagogical interaction represents an innovative approach aimed at enhancing professional competence among university graduates. This approach emphasizes shared values in intercultural dialogues and underscores tolerance as fundamental for humane social interaction. It equips teachers to navigate diverse cultural contexts effectively, transcending their own cultural boundaries to engage constructively where values, attitudes, and norms differ. Central to this competence is the teacher's ability to understand and respect cultural diversity, interpreting information contextually and fostering dialogue based on personal meaning.

Intercultural competence encompasses perceiving, comprehending, appropriating, and analyzing events through cultural lenses. It involves motivational aspects, sustaining interest in learning foreign languages and cultures, cognitive dimensions in acquiring professional knowledge for intercultural interactions, operational skills in practical intercultural contexts, reflexive capacities for self-reflection and personal growth, and integrative-personal qualities that cultivate a secondary linguistic persona.

Pedagogical interaction exemplifies intercultural competence through mutual influence between participants and cultural phenomena, fostering reciprocal changes while maintaining natural connections to educational content. The theoretical and methodological framework for developing intercultural competence integrates philosophical, scientific, methodological, and technological approaches. It explores socio-cultural contexts alongside the educational system's capacity to train future teachers for intercultural interactions, integrating students' experiences into their professional development. This approach aligns educational values with principles of coherence, integrity, and practicality, guided by international and Russian educational standards.

The structural-functional model for cultivating intercultural competence progresses through stages of exploration, conceptual determination, and concrete generalization. Each stage integrates linguistic, subject-intercultural, and socio-intercultural competencies, along with intercultural auto-competence, within the broader fabric of intercultural competence development.

Effective development of a future teacher's intercultural competence within pedagogical interaction requires socio-pedagogical conditions that nurture a communicative culture supportive of intercultural growth. These conditions encompass substantive aspects of educational content and procedural dimensions of pedagogical practice, ensuring a holistic approach to competence formation.

To effectively cultivate the intercultural competence of future teachers, it is essential to establish and implement a comprehensive set of pedagogical conditions within the educational process of a pedagogical university. These conditions encompass two interconnected groups, addressing both content-related and organizational aspects to ensure a robust pedagogical framework conducive to achieving a high level of intercultural competence among graduates.

The substantive conditions consist of four interrelated elements: integrating a specialized academic discipline on "Dialogue in an Intercultural Context" into the curriculum; developing tasks for independent student work focused on intercultural communication issues; designing classes within a creative student laboratory dedicated to intercultural didactics during extracurricular activities; and leveraging the resources of students' teaching practice within the educational process.

Complementing these, the procedural conditions encompass another set of four interrelated measures: activating the motivational and value components of educational activities; organizing independent student work to solve professional and pedagogical challenges in an interculturally oriented learning environment; engaging students in interactive, interculturally focused educational settings; and actively externalizing key components of students' intercultural competence.
An experimental assessment of the concept's impact on the development of future teachers' intercultural competence involves ongoing monitoring to evaluate its effectiveness within the pedagogical university's educational practices. Rigorous evaluation ensures comprehensive scrutiny of all aspects to achieve the anticipated positive outcome: a high level of intercultural competence among university graduates.

Analysis during the organizational-search phase of the experiment revealed minor disparities in the intercultural competence experience between the experimental and control groups, predominantly characterized by adaptive-reproducing levels. However, both groups showed limited attainment at the varying-situational level, with no notable development at the creative-constructive level.

Subsequent analysis during the conceptual-determining stage demonstrated significant progress among experimental group students, advancing from adaptive-reproducing through varying-situational to creative-constructive levels. In contrast, the control group, where the developed concept was not implemented, exhibited minimal advancement beyond adaptive-reproducing levels, underscoring the effectiveness of the developed pedagogical approach in enhancing intercultural competence development.

4 Conclusion

The importance of addressing the formation of students' intercultural competence in pedagogical interaction is underscored by several critical factors. Firstly, it aligns with the evolving educational landscape as Russia integrates into the global educational sphere and adheres to Bologna Process agreements. Secondly, there is a recognized deficiency in the conceptual frameworks necessary for developing future teachers' intercultural competence within pedagogical interactions. Moreover, there is a growing demand for teachers to possess advanced intercultural competence when engaging with diverse student populations. Additionally, existing tools for measuring and evaluating future teachers' intercultural competence remain underdeveloped, highlighting a critical need to establish robust assessment mechanisms. Lastly, there is a pressing requirement to build an infrastructure for collecting data on students' development of intercultural competence in pedagogical settings.

Furthermore, contemporary socio-cultural and theoretical-pedagogical trends emphasize the interplay of diverse cultures, particularly evident in humanities education and foreign language instruction. Consequently, teacher education programs increasingly prioritize interculturally oriented teaching practices, recognizing the experience of intercultural competence as integral to preparing future educators.

The study supports the notion of "student's experience of intercultural competence" as central to defining the pedagogical concept of a "cultured person". This concept posits that future teachers' interactions with native speakers of the language they teach form the basis for personal cultural meanings and principles, which are reflected in their value orientations during pedagogical interactions.

The functional completeness of intercultural competence (encompassing cultural, integrative, informational, developmental, and educational dimensions) within the pedagogical interaction framework is crucial for fostering a subject-subject approach to educational formation.

Ultimately, the concept of developing future teachers' intercultural competence necessitates a comprehensive exploration of categorical and conceptual terminology. This exploration facilitates a deeper understanding of the processes involved, emphasizing the interrelationships and levels of each concept—from foundational terms like "culture", "dialogue of cultures", and "tolerance", to more specialized concepts such as "intercultural competence" and "experience of intercultural competence".
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