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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: FORMING A TEACHER'S READINESS FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Abstract. In the context of growing cultural diversity and globalization, intercultural communication has become a fundamental competency in the education system. Teachers are increasingly expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to foster inclusive, respectful, and culturally responsive learning environments. This article explores the significance of intercultural communication in education and highlights approaches to developing teachers' readiness for intercultural dialogue. Developing teachers' readiness for such engagement necessitates a systematic approach to cultivating intercultural competence—a dynamic construct comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that enable respectful and effective communication across cultural boundaries. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of key models of intercultural competence, as well as their main principles are summarized. It is summarized how to integrate theoretical principles into the practical plane. The role of teachers in promoting intercultural dialogue is determined. The formation of future teachers' readiness for intercultural communication includes sensitivity to the diverse cultural identities of students, pedagogical flexibility in the integration of multicultural content and approaches, reflective awareness of one's own cultural biases and pedagogical practice. Pedagogical and institutional strategies to support the formation of such competence in teachers are investigated, with a special emphasis on professional training and advanced training.

Keywords: intercultural communication, teacher education, intercultural competence, cultural diversity, teacher, professional development.

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МІЖКУЛЬТУРНА КОМУНІКАЦІЯ В ОСВІТНЬОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ: ФОРМУВАННЯ ГОТОВНОСТІ ПЕДАГОГА ДО МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО ДІАЛОГУ

Анотація. В умовах зростаючого культурного розмаїття та глобалізації міжкультурна комунікація стала фундаментальною компетенцією в системі освіти. Від вчителів дедалі частіше очікується не лише передача знань, а й сприяння інклюзивному та культурно чутливому навчальному середовищу. У статті досліджується значення міжкультурної комунікації в освіті та висвітлюються підходи до розвитку готовності вчителів до міжкультурного діалогу. Розвиток готовності вчителів до такої взаємодії вимагає системного підходу до розвитку міжкультурної компетентності – динамічного конструкту, що включає когнітивні, афективні та поведінкові виміри, що забезпечують шанобливе та ефективне спілкування через культурні кордони. Особливу увагу приділено аналізу ключових моделей міжкультурної компетентності, а також узагальнено їх основні принципи. Узагальнено, як теоретичні засади інтегрувати у практичну площину. Визначено роль педагогів у сприянні міжкультурному діалогу. Формування готовності майбутніх педагогів до міжкультурної комунікації включає чутливість до різноманітних культурних ідентичностей учнів, педагогічну гнучкість в інтеграції мультикультурного контенту та підходів, рефлексивне усвідомлення власних культурних упереджень та педагогічної практики. Досліджено педагогічні та інституційні стратегії для підтримки формування такої компетентності у педагогів, з особливим акцентом на професійну підготовку та підвищення кваліфікації.

Ключові слова. Міжкультурна комунікація, педагогічна освіта, міжкультурна компетентність, культурне розмаїття, вчитель, професійний розвиток.

Modern educational environments are characterized by cultural plurality, shaped by processes such as migration, internationalization of education, and global interconnectedness. In this context, effective intercultural communication is not an optional skill but a professional imperative for teachers (Євтух, 2021). The ability to engage in intercultural dialogue is essential for promoting mutual understanding, reducing prejudices, and fostering educational equity (Ігнатова, 2023).

Preparing teachers for such roles requires a deliberate focus on cultivating intercultural competence—a combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors that support meaningful and respectful interaction across cultures. This article examines the pedagogical and institutional strategies for forming teachers' readiness for intercultural communication, emphasizing both pre-service and in-service contexts (Ігнатова, 2024).

The modern educational landscape is characterized by pronounced cultural multiplicity, stemming from transnational migration, internationalization of education, and global interconnectedness (Лазаренко, 2020). Within this context, intercultural communication is no longer an auxiliary skill but a core professional requirement for educators. The capacity to engage in intercultural dialogue is essential for fostering mutual understanding, mitigating stereotypes, and promoting educational equity.

Intercultural communication refers to the interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In educational settings, it involves more than linguistic proficiency; it encompasses understanding cultural norms, values, worldviews, and communication styles. The study of intercultural communication in education is underpinned by interdisciplinary theories that draw on linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and pedagogy. These foundations not only define the conceptual landscape of intercultural competence but also inform the design of educational practices and teacher preparation programs. In this section, we examine key theoretical models and the contributions of influential scholars to the understanding of intercultural communication within the educational sphere.

One of the most influential frameworks in the field is Michael Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, originally developed in the context of foreign language education. Byram argued that effective intercultural communication involves more than linguistic proficiency; it requires the ability to interpret and relate cultural meanings and to mediate between different cultural perspectives (Byram, 2020).

Byram's model highlights five core components:

- attitudes (openness and curiosity toward other cultures, and readiness to suspend one's own cultural assumptions);
- knowledge (understanding of social groups, cultural practices, and products (both one's own and others'));

- skills of interpreting and relating (the ability to analyze cultural materials or behaviors and relate them to one's own culture);
- skills of discovery and interaction (the capacity to acquire new knowledge about a culture and engage in real-time intercultural interaction);
- critical cultural awareness (the ability to evaluate perspectives, practices, and products critically, including one's own).

In educational contexts, Byram's model emphasizes the development of reflective and ethical dimensions of intercultural dialogue, which are essential in diverse classrooms.

Darla Deardorff proposed a process-oriented model of intercultural competence that has gained wide recognition among educators and policymakers. Based on a Delphi study involving international experts, her model views intercultural competence as a cyclical and developmental process, rather than a fixed set of traits.

Key elements include:

- internal outcomes (adaptability, flexibility, empathy, and an ethnorelative worldview);
- external outcomes (effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations);
- foundational attitudes (respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery);
- knowledge and skills (cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and skills for listening, observing, evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting).

Deardorff's framework is particularly valuable in teacher education, as it supports formative, ongoing development, encouraging reflective practice and experiential learning (Deardorff, 2009).

Milton Bennett contributed significantly through his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which outlines a progression from ethnocentric to ethnorelative worldviews. This model is useful for understanding how individuals evolve in their capacity for intercultural sensitivity. The six stages include: denial of difference; defense against difference; minimization of difference; acceptance of difference; adaptation to difference; integration of difference (Bennet, 2013).

In teacher training, this model serves as a diagnostic and developmental tool. It helps educators assess their own intercultural positioning and identify strategies to support their movement toward greater intercultural effectiveness.

While not strictly models of communication, the pedagogical theories of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) and Geneva Gay (2002) provide critical insight into how culture intersects with teaching and learning. Their work on culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy underscores the importance of aligning educational practices with students' cultural identities and lived experiences.

Main principles are as follows:

- academic success (all students are expected to succeed);
- cultural competence (teachers help students maintain cultural integrity while succeeding academically);

- sociopolitical consciousness (educators equip students to recognize, critique, and act upon social inequities).

These pedagogies demand that teachers recognize culture as central to the learning process and view intercultural communication as a tool for empowerment rather than simply tolerance.

In Kathryn Sorrells' critical approach to intercultural communication, she frames it as praxis—a process that involves reflection, dialogue, and action situated within structures of power. This approach moves beyond competence to emphasize social justice and global citizenship in education.

Sorrells highlights the need for educators to understand how histories of inequality shape intercultural interactions; address systems of privilege and marginalization within educational institutions; engage students in transformative dialogue that leads to collective action (Sorrells, 2022).

Her work is particularly relevant in anti-racist and decolonial approaches to education, where intercultural communication is seen as a vehicle for structural change.

The theoretical foundations discussed above provide educators and researchers with multiple lenses through which to understand and cultivate intercultural communication in education. They inform curriculum design, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and institutional policies.

Effective integration requires curricular embedding, designing courses and modules based on theoretical frameworks of intercultural competence, also professional development, providing in-service teachers with opportunities to reflect on theory and apply it in classroom contexts, and research-based evaluation, using established models to assess teachers' intercultural growth and students' experiences.

By rooting practice in well-established theoretical models, educational institutions can ensure that efforts to promote intercultural communication are coherent, purposeful, and transformative.

Significant components of intercultural competence include cognitive dimension, awareness of cultural differences and knowledge about cultural systems, affective dimension, openness, curiosity, and respect toward cultural diversity, behavioral dimension, skills for effective communication, empathy, conflict resolution, and adaptability.

Scholars such as Deardorff and Byram emphasize that intercultural competence is dynamic and developmental, suggesting that it can be purposefully nurtured through educational interventions.

Teachers play a crucial role as mediators of intercultural dialogue. Their capacity to recognize and value diversity directly influences classroom climate, student engagement, and the overall inclusivity of education.

Teachers hold a pivotal position in shaping the values, attitudes, and behaviors of students in relation to cultural diversity. In multicultural classrooms, where students may differ in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, socio-economic background, and worldview, teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge but also mediators of social understanding and intercultural engagement.

1. Agents of Socialization and Inclusion

Teachers serve as agents of socialization, helping students interpret and navigate cultural norms and expectations. Their words, behaviors, and implicit messages can either reinforce cultural biases or promote open-mindedness and inclusion. A teacher who models curiosity, empathy, and respect toward different cultures creates a learning environment where diversity is normalized and valued.

Inclusive teaching practices that acknowledge and integrate cultural perspectives—such as using multicultural literature, recognizing diverse holidays, or encouraging multilingual expression—signal to students that their identities are affirmed and appreciated. Such practices also challenge dominant narratives and foster critical multicultural literacy among students.

2. Facilitators of Intercultural Dialogue

Dialogue is a core component of intercultural competence. In the educational context, it involves the intentional creation of space for students to express their cultural perspectives, listen actively to others, and engage in respectful disagreement and reflection.

Teachers must be equipped to guide these interactions with sensitivity. This includes mediating misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences; setting norms for respectful discussion and collaboration; encouraging students to articulate their identities and experiences; addressing stereotypes or discriminatory remarks constructively and educationally.

In doing so, teachers help students move beyond superficial tolerance to meaningful intercultural engagement and mutual understanding.

3. Culturally Responsive Pedagogues

The concept of culturally responsive pedagogy, developed by scholars such as Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings, emphasizes the need for teaching practices that recognize the cultural backgrounds of learners as assets rather than deficits. Teachers must adapt their methods to be relevant to students' lived experiences, learning styles, and sociocultural realities.

Being a culturally responsive teacher involves curricular relevance; integrating examples, histories, and contributions from a variety of cultures, instructional flexibility, adjusting communication styles, classroom routines, and assessment methods to accommodate diverse learners; high expectations with support, believing in all students' potential and providing the differentiated resources they need to succeed.

These approaches are essential for equity in education, helping to bridge achievement gaps that often correlate with cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

4. Reflective Practitioners

Teachers cannot effectively support intercultural dialogue without engaging in critical self-reflection. This involves an ongoing examination of one's own cultural assumptions, teaching practices, and positionality within power structures. By recognizing their own biases and blind spots, teachers become more attuned to the needs of their students and better equipped to create equitable classroom environments.

Reflective practice can be supported through journaling and narrative inquiry, peer observation and feedback, engagement with research and theory on intercultural education, and participation in professional learning communities focused on diversity and inclusion.

Such reflection transforms teaching from a set of technical skills into an ethical and relational practice grounded in intercultural awareness.

5. Bridge Builders Between School and Community

In diverse educational contexts, teachers also act as intercultural bridge builders between the school and students' families and communities. Understanding and respecting the cultural values of students' home environments helps build trust and enhances communication between school and family. This may involve learning about community norms and practices, using culturally appropriate channels to engage parents, advocating for family participation in school decision-making, supporting bilingual communication and translation services.

When teachers engage with communities in meaningful ways, they reinforce the message that education is a collaborative and inclusive process.

The role of teachers in fostering intercultural dialogue is multifaceted and dynamic. It requires not only knowledge and sensitivity but also intentional pedagogical strategies and a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development. Teachers who embrace this role contribute to more cohesive, respectful, and just educational environments—preparing students to navigate and contribute to an increasingly interconnected world.

Teachers' readiness for intercultural communication is providing by:

- ✓ Interpersonal sensitivity to students' diverse cultural identities;
- ✓ Pedagogical flexibility in integrating multicultural content and approaches;
- ✓ Reflective awareness of one's own cultural biases and teaching practices.

Teachers must also serve as role models in demonstrating intercultural respect and competence. As such, their preparation must go beyond technical training to include ethical, emotional, and critical dimensions.

Effective preparation of teachers for intercultural communication can be achieved through a range of strategies, comprising:

1. Curriculum Integration. Incorporating intercultural themes into teacher education programs—through modules on global education, cultural studies, and diversity—can lay the foundation for awareness and reflection.

2. Experiential Learning. Programs such as student exchanges, international teaching practica, and service learning in multicultural settings provide firsthand experience with cultural diversity.

3. Critical Reflection. Encouraging teachers to reflect on their cultural identity, privileges, and biases fosters deeper self-awareness and openness to other perspectives.

4. Interdisciplinary Collaboration. Partnering with fields such as sociology, anthropology, and communication studies can enrich teacher training and provide a broader context for intercultural issues.

5. Institutional Support. Schools and universities must cultivate inclusive environments, support professional development in intercultural competence, and value diversity as an institutional priority.

Despite its importance, preparing teachers for intercultural dialogue faces several challenges: resistance to change in attitudes and established teaching practices; insufficient training or lack of qualified trainers in intercultural education; contextual constraints, such as limited time, rigid curricula, and standardized testing pressures.

Overcoming these challenges requires a systemic approach that involves educational policy, institutional leadership, and community engagement.

Conclusion. In a world marked by cultural diversity and global interaction, intercultural communication is a cornerstone of effective teaching. Forming teachers' readiness for intercultural dialogue is not only a response to demographic changes but also a commitment to democratic values and inclusive education.

Empowering teachers with intercultural competence enriches the learning experience, strengthens social cohesion, and prepares students to thrive in a multicultural world. As such, intercultural communication must be recognized as a vital component of teacher education and professional development.

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