

# Formation of tolerance in multicultural educational environment

## Formación de la tolerancia en el entorno educativo multicultural

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#### ABSTRACT:

One of the main problems of modern Russian society is its instability in terms of intercultural and interethnic relations. In this instability, tolerant relations between individual ethnic groups are violated. In this regard, the issue of formation of tolerance is actualized. On the basis of literature review, the article analyzes the concepts of "multicultural educational environment" and "tolerance" in their interrelation. It was revealed that multicultural educational environment is a necessary condition for formation of tolerance. Types, criteria, and principles of tolerance were revealed. The concept of ethnotolerance as a kind of tolerance was substantiated. Conditions and stages of formation of tolerance in the multicultural educational environment were developed. The study of the problem of tolerance formation makes a certain contribution to the pedagogical science and opens up new opportunities in educational process.

**Keywords:** tolerance; ethnotolerance; ethnos; multicultural educational environment; multi-ethnic educational environment

#### RESUMEN:

Uno de los principales problemas de la sociedad rusa moderna es su inestabilidad en términos de relaciones interculturales e interétnicas. En este clima de inestabilidad, se violan las relaciones entre grupos étnicos individuales. En este artículo se analiza el tema de la formación para la tolerancia. Sobre la base de la revisión de la literatura, el artículo analiza los conceptos de "ambiente educativo multicultural" y su interrelación con la "tolerancia". Se pone de manifiesto que el entorno educativo multicultural es una condición necesaria para la formación de la tolerancia y se exponen los tipos, criterios y principios de tolerancia. Se fundamenta el concepto de etnotolerancia como un tipo de tolerancia, se desarrollaron condiciones y etapas de formación de la tolerancia en el entorno educativo multicultural. El estudio del problema de la formación de la tolerancia ofrece una contribución a la ciencia pedagógica y abre nuevas oportunidades en el proceso educativo.

**Palabras clave:** tolerancia; etnotolerancia; etnos; ambiente educativo multicultural; ambiente educativo multiétnico

## 1. Introduction

Today, a primary objective of modernization of Russian education is to establish life priorities and develop positive spiritual qualities in an individual, which would enhance development

and harmonization of intercultural and interethnic relations. It is well known that the current state of Russian society can be described as unsteady and unstable at times. In the context of this instability, tolerant relations between individual ethnic groups deteriorate, while it is tolerance that is an indispensable condition for successful development of multicultural society. The phenomena of globalization, migration, and expanding intercultural communication inevitably lead to the emergence of new political, educational, social and cultural problems, causing intolerant attitudes of members of certain ethnic groups to representatives of other ethnic groups and to special aspects of their cultures. Ethnocentric intolerance may become an obstacle to tolerance formation. The mainstay of this intolerance is militant ethnocentrism that fails to accept and condemns other cultural values and causes a negative reaction towards representatives of certain ethnic groups, etc. Such ethnocentrism is known to exacerbate conflicts and is characterized by relatively drastic changes in the behaviors of the masses, which may even include taking an active part in ethnic aggression (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014).

To overcome ominous effects of intolerance, it is necessary to update the structure and content of education as decisive conditions for formation of a system of modern socially significant values and tolerant attitudes in students. Tolerance in the process of socialization of an individual should become a natural norm that would determine their mentality and behavior.

According to researchers, the world is faced with an emergency situation that calls to rise to the task and collectively build such education that would contribute to a sustainable way of building a fair and inclusive society (Aguado-Odina, 2017; Kim and So, 2018; Lawyer, 2018) that, in turn, would promote global dialogue and social justice (Sleeter, 2018).

Thus, modern education faces challenges in preparing students to live in multicultural, multi-ethnic environment and in developing their skills to communicate and cooperate with people of different cultures and nationalities. Development of a global outlook and integration into the world community requires that both national and foreign cultural traditions be taken into account in teaching. Such a phenomenon as multicultural educational space is a response to the challenges of modernity. The purpose of the article is to show that multicultural educational space is a necessary environment for tolerance formation.

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## **2. Literature review**

Let us consider special aspect of the concepts "multicultural educational space" and "tolerance".

According to researchers, multicultural education and, consequently, multicultural educational environment open up great opportunities for students to learn human and national values for meaningful cooperation of various ethnic cultures in a multiethnic environment to ensure a dialogue of cultures (Kharitonov, 2013; Banks, 2013; Jackson, 2013).

The "multicultural educational environment" phenomenon under study is a whole complex integral system including multidimensional relations that ensure reproduction and development of culture in the form of continuous social and cultural transmission of its components and promote self-determination and self-fulfillment of an individual in a changing sociocultural environment through development and interiorization of cultural values (Gorshenina, 2013). Gukalenko, who speaks in terms of "multicultural educational environment", defines it as an environment that "promotes formation and development in the younger generation of an objective view of the diversity of world cultures and the cultures of Russia, their mutual influence, and engrafts the ability for tolerant interaction with representatives of other cultures" (Gukalenko, 2017). Herewith, the researcher emphasizes that multicultural educational environment in different regions could have its own characteristics and could constitute different regional multicultural education systems and reflect the specifics of ethnic diversity.

Essential features of the multicultural educational environment in higher school are the following: formation of such consciousness in students that would be focused on perception

of the multipolar world and understanding of the uniqueness of cultures of various peoples; adoption of principles of non-violence towards other people, of tolerance, effective cooperation, and social justice; multicultural education focused on development of empathy, acceptance, and assimilation of values of other cultures (Zhurlova, 2017).

The following should serve as fundamental principles of multicultural educational environment: the principle of integrity, that is, unity of the training, education, and development processes; the principle of openness, that is, the openness of educational environment into a wider framework of the sociocultural space; the principle of individualization, that is, availability of conditions for fulfillment of the personal potential of each actor in the educational environment (Kharina, 2013).

As for tolerance, modern Russian literature often equates "tolerance" with the concept of "leniency" and describes it as "leniency with other people's lifestyles, behaviors, customs, feelings, opinions, ideas, and beliefs" (Pavlenok, 2016). "Tolerance is a feature of neutral perception by an individual of one person, a group of persons, or a situation as a whole, consisting in conscious suppression of aversion caused by everything that signifies a difference in the object provided that these features do not carry an obvious threat to the individual" (Medushevskiy, 2014).

Fostering tolerance in a multinational environment plays a major role, being a survival condition for multicultural communities. It is a means whereby it is possible to successfully consolidate multicultural societies. For example, "multicultural education in Russia, on the one hand, contributes to formation of cultural identity and ethnic identification of students and, on the other hand, prevents their ethnocultural isolation from other ethnic groups" (Koryakina, 2017).

Emphasis on the problem of tolerance stems from its key role in solving the problems of the above communities. Tolerance is a central component of multiculturalism and reflects its basic ideas, revealing the universal through particular variations of people (Nakaya, 2018; Paul-Binyamin and Reingold, 2014; Shannon-Baker, 2018; Smith, 2014). The experience of interdisciplinary scientific research on tolerance began to burgeon in the 1990s, as evidenced by publications reflecting the findings of studies on tolerance as a worldview and a specific form of social relations, tolerant and intolerant behavior, and formation of tolerance (Medushevskiy, 2017).

Tolerance can be represented as non-interference and respect for differences, since the basis of tolerant communication between different ethnic groups is associated with learning other cultures and introduction to them.

According to researchers, "tolerance is described as "respect–understanding–acceptance", as the ability and willingness to behave in accordance with the world's cultural values, and as efforts towards harmony and pluralism" (Pochebut and Beznosov, 2017).

Tolerance admits the right of a representative of any culture for free behavior and expression of their views while being favorably disposed towards the behavior, opinions, and culture of other people. This is a value-based attitude of a person towards others, expressed in recognition, acceptance, and understanding of people from other cultures.

Tolerance does not mean passive acceptance, it is rather an active search for things in common with something incomprehensible, ambiguous, alien, and the desire to understand this ambiguous. Tolerance should not be interpreted as unnatural submission to the opinions, views or beliefs of others; rather, it is a proactive ethical approach to positive interaction with people from a different culture, a different national and religious environment (Tsoraev, 2014).

A basic methodological premise of studying the phenomenon of tolerance is the principle of humanism, since tolerance does not accept violence, cruelty, or encroachment on personal freedom; tolerance is a manifestation of freedom of an individual as the ability to make a meaningful, responsible, and free choice of their own position towards "others" (Shustov, 2015).

Tolerance is focused on dialogue, which manifests in such an attitude to others when the subject of tolerance has to temporarily "forget" their dissent, or rather "switch" their

attention from an aversive difference to the personality of its carrier, whereby he sees a representative of the human race, which unites people in the whole world (Chi Stilina, 2014).

Tolerant relations between people become an important indicator of their successful consolidation as tolerance leads to reasonable view on relationships associated with the issues of ethnic and national identity (Saripudin and Komalasari, 2015). There is also an opinion that culture and traditional adaptation factors themselves are important as tolerant behavior markers (Komalasari and Saripudin, 2015). Thus, tolerance coupled with ethnic identity leads to creation of a united and harmonious society (Awang, Kutty and Ahmad, 2014). The importance of intercultural knowledge is emphasized, since it is a prerequisite for social integration and unity (Berggren and Nilsson, 2016).

It is necessary to immerse a student in a "space of tolerance", that is, inextricable connection of their everyday life with tolerant practices existing or emerging in society (Shumanskaya, 2013) and to overcome a fragmented public perception of tolerance and especially the culture of intolerant behavior (Medushevskiy, 2016).

In the context of the above definitions, multicultural educational environment can be represented as a multinational multi-ethnic educational environment where relationship between students and educational institutions develop.

In turn, a multi-ethnic educational environment can be represented as part of an educational environment as a combination of factors influencing formation of a personality that would possess such quality as tolerance, in other words, that would seek to comprehend other ethnic cultures, be ready for positive intercultural interaction and able to live in harmony with representatives of other nationalities.

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### **3. Discussion**

It should be noted that educational environment can be represented as a multilevel structure where the following can be distinguished: satisfaction of the need for comfort, self-affirmation, psychological safety, self-fulfillment, etc. is a personality level; satisfaction of the needs of an individual as a member of a group (the need for recognition, respect, harmonious relationships, etc.) is a microenvironment level (their family, inner circle, or team at work); satisfaction of their needs as a representative of society (the need for social security, safety, material well-being, etc.) is a macroenvironment level (society).

The above levels are directly related to the possibility of creating a tolerant environment. Violation of at least one of them leads to intolerant behavior. A commitment to formation of a tolerant personality in a tolerant environment gives reason to consider the concept of "multicultural educational space" as a reflection of unity of the educational system and the socio-cultural and spiritual life of society in overcoming the challenges of today's multicultural society.

Thus, multicultural educational environment as a multi-ethnic educational environment is a multinational environment for functioning of certain intercultural social and educational relations between an individual and a public educational institution, official and unofficial mechanisms intended to transform the life's activity of people living in the same space, with the aim to internalize the national culture and to ensure formation of human values by means of multicultural education.

In general, note that multi-ethnic educational environment possesses both general features that are common to an educational environment and special qualities. The term "multi-ethnic educational environment" is often used in a strict sense, namely as an environment where education actors cooperate, being representatives of different ethnic groups. It should be noted that the factor of multi-ethnicity lays the groundwork for effective interaction and mutual understanding between among the actors in educational environment, without automatically leading to implementation of these processes.

Thus, the following functions of a multi-ethnic educational environment can be distinguished as specific ones: ethnocultural and educational function that implies not only knowledge of one's own traditional national culture but also of other national cultures of the world; value-

orientational function, which consists in formation of a system of value-based tolerant orientations and attitudes in the course of interethnic communication; social-adaptational function, which consists in effective adaptation of students to the conditions of living in today's multi-ethnic society.

It is such type of environment where an educated tolerant individual is raised, that is, having the willingness to accept others as they are and to interact with them on the basis of consent.

In other words, tolerance in the framework of intercultural communication is most productive where there is a desire for it. Tolerance can be referred to as extra-ethnic awareness of members of different ethnic groups. It develops where an ethnic society is not fixated on its internal stereotypes and local value-based orientations, but is open to the principles of the world community.

Thus, tolerance is associated with a certain development of value principles in an individual. Tolerance is the art of living in a world of different people and ideas.

Based on the foregoing, it can be noted that tolerance is the willingness to interact with others as they are. Tolerance is not to be imposed as an attitude, but it is rather to be acquired through personal life experience, education, and information. It has a nature of an individual voluntary choice. As an action, tolerance is a proactive stance of deliberate non-interference and self-restriction. This is a voluntary consent to mutual acceptance of different and opposing individuals.

A number of types of the "tolerance" concept can be distinguished.

"Tolerance as a lack of understanding". According to this interpretation of tolerance, religious and metaphysical views, as well as specific values of a certain culture are not something unimportant for human activity and social development. Herein, tolerance serves as respect for others but, at the same time, as the inability to understand them and interact with them.

"Tolerance as condescendence". This perspective of tolerance appears as a concession to the weaknesses of others, combined with a certain amount of contempt for them. This type allows for differences but does not recognize them; it only perceives and observes them.

"Tolerance as a critical dialogue". Hereby, tolerance is meant to be respect for different viewpoints, combined with an attitude towards their mutual modification, which is possible as a result of a critical dialogue.

In today's world, it is this type that is the most effective. In other words, tolerance is less based solely on understanding of differences and dissimilarities and more on accepting the idea that such a judgment, phenomenon, action, or situation has the right to be, to exist. In other words, it recognizes and accepts the existence of differences.

Summarizing the above, the authors believe that the contemporary notion of the essence of tolerance is based on leniency, recognition, acceptance, understanding, and respect for otherness, diversity, as well as readiness for dialogue.

The following tolerance criteria can be distinguished: equality and mutual respect of members of a group or society, friendliness and tolerant attitude to various groups, equal opportunity for participation in political life for all members of society, preservation and development of cultural identities and languages of national minorities, the freedom of faith provided that this does not infringe upon the rights and opportunities of other members of society, and cooperation and solidarity in solving common problems.

Thus, tolerance is a broad concept that includes social, religious, genealogical, ethnic, and gender tolerance.

When considering tolerance as a product of multicultural educational environment, it is primarily ethnic tolerance that is of interest.

Tolerance in the context of interethnic and intercultural communication is recognition of the value of cultural and ethnic diversity, the value of a "different one". Intercultural and interethnic communication becomes a condition for bringing this principle into reality. Ethnic tolerance is an act of moral self-identification of ethnicities in relation to the environment

and to themselves, as well as of their ethnic identity.

What is referred to as ethnic tolerance is the absence of negative attitude towards a particular ethnic culture, as well as the presence of a positive image of another culture while maintaining a positive attitude of one's own culture. This means that ethnic tolerance is an attribute of ethnic integration that is characterized by acceptance and positive attitude towards one's own ethnic culture and ethnic culture of the groups that this group comes into contact with. Such a perspective of adequacy of group perception is based on the premise of value equality of ethnic cultures and the lack of superiority of one culture over another one in this respect.

Ethnic tolerance can be viewed as a special quality of an ethnically identified person, which is determined by their tolerance to a different way of life: to foreign morals, traditions, and customs; to opposing ideas, opinions, and feelings.

It can manifest on several levels: social level – tolerance for views and outlook of other ethnic groups; social and psychological level – tolerance for other ethnic groups and their behavior; general psychological level – tolerance for cognitive, emotional and volitional processes and national temperament of one's communication partners; physiological level – in the form of tolerance of heat, cold, and other environmental influences.

Psychological literature dealing with the problems of ethnic tolerance considers this phenomenon as a complex personality formation that manifests in tolerance for a different way of life, foreign customs, traditions, morals, different feelings, opinions, and ideas. It is referred to as the most important value of interethnic relations in the context of growing multinationality and multiculturalism of communities (Artemyeva, 2016; Kudrina, 2013).

Thus, ethnic tolerance "can be viewed as a social and psychological characteristic implying a respectful attitude to "foreign" traditions and cultures, a desire for peaceful coexistence and interaction between various ethnic groups" (Bakulina, 2014).

Some elements of ethnic tolerance can be identified: no negative stereotypes (there are no bad peoples, there may only be bad people); no discrimination (communication partners treat each other with due care); respect for the languages of communication; a positive attitude towards national cultures (a clear motivation and desire to study one's own and other national cultures); the absence of any kind of pressure and violence.

Let us formulate conditions that would ensure formation of effective ethnotolerance: a multi-ethnic educational environment; recognition of the equality of communication partners; development of students' pride in their own ethnic culture; development of acceptance and respect for ethnic forms and differences.

Formation of ethnotolerance is a complex and lengthy process that begins in childhood and continues throughout life. This process proceeds under the influence of many conditions and factors, and education is a decisive one among them. It is a major public institution designed for personality socialization and transfer of accumulated knowledge, core values and experience.

Pochebut isolates the following stages in tolerant consciousness formation: 1) identification of another person in terms of basic social categorization "we-they"; 2) a comparison process based on a variety of external features allows one to determine "similarity-difference"; 3) an assessment of the other one according to the "safe-dangerous" criteria; 4) the emergence of tolerant/intolerant attitude on the grounds of "friendliness/hostility" (Pochebut, 2017).

While agreeing with the researcher, the authors believe that the tolerance (ethnotolerance) formation process should also include several functional stages.

The first stage is motivational, creating a positive emotional attitude towards such universal human values as tolerance for the customs and traditions of different peoples, for their religion, etc. Here are the following principles of tolerance:

- Tolerance is based on leniency, recognition, acceptance, understanding and respect for diversity, differences, as well as readiness for dialogue;
- Tolerance is not reduced to indifference, conformism, infringement of personal interests; contrarily, on the one hand, it implies stability as the ability of an individual to implement

their personal stance and attitudes, on the other hand, flexibility as the ability to respect the attitudes and values of other people.

The second stage is cognitive, aimed at introducing students to the global universal values and to real ethic problems in society and searching for ways to solve them, as well as developing the ability to value the historical experience and economic, cultural, social and other types of ties among Russia's ethnic groups. At this stage, the following principles of tolerance appear:

- Individual ethnic tolerance manifests and emerges in conundrums and controversies in course of interaction with ethnophors;
- Tolerance for people belonging to other ethnic groups suggests that people are aware of similarities and sameness that underlie differences. For example, one recognizes the belonging of ethnic groups to the human society as a whole.
- Ethnic tolerance is based on the equality and equivalence of parties. The principle of ethnic tolerance is to treat the "other one" as an equally worthy individual. Thus, ethnic tolerance eliminates paternalism whereby one ethnic group tends to patronize the other one.

The third stage is final, aiming to summarize the resulting data and coordinate further actions. At this stage, testing is serves as a primary tool. The obtained results can be useful in planning further work in tolerance (ethnotolerance) formation. The principles of tolerance at this stage are:

- Ethnic tolerance is active, that is, characterized by neither a passive, indifferent attitude to an event nor unprincipled appeasement and acquiescence in violence and injustice. On the contrary, it is characterized by constant readiness and desire for interethnic dialogue, a polylogue. A criterion of tolerant acceptance of dissimilar worldviews is a commitment to moral and ethical principles and norms of human existence that are able to ensure peaceful interaction of ethnic communities and ethnophors.

Consequently, tolerance is formed as an integrative and multifunctional phenomenon that can act both as a complex scientific-theoretical problem and at the same time as such ethno-cultural practices as a spiritual value and as a particular awareness in the field of ethnology, as a psycho-pedagogical idea and an independent personal quality.

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## 4. Conclusion

Thus, the following conclusions were made from this research:

1. Multicultural educational environment can be represented as a multinational multi-ethnic educational environment where relationships between students and educational institutions develop. Multi-ethnic educational environment is part of the educational environment as a whole and serves as a precondition for implementation of multicultural education, forming tolerance and ethnotolerance as required and independent qualities of an individual through successive functional stages.
  2. The problem of multicultural educational space can be considered as a phenomenon reflecting special aspects of a new insight into education, its structure and the innovative processes that form tolerance as one of individual life priorities. Multicultural educational environment is indispensable for tolerance formation.
  3. The process of tolerance (ethnotolerance) formation also includes several functional stages: motivational, which creates a positive emotional attitude for tolerance for customs, traditions and communion of different nations; cognitive, which introduces students to real ethnic problems in society and urges them to find ways to address them; the final stage whose goal it is to summarize the data obtained and to coordinate further tolerance formation action.
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