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Teachers' Intercultural Competence and Internationalization of Higher Education

Ryazan State University named for S.A. Yesenin

Olesia Chernetcova

Introduction

The political, cultural and economic development of Russia in the context of international cooperation, global competition, and internationalization of higher education is leading to crucial changes in the way of life and the system of education. The widespread application of the Common European Framework of Reference in the world over the last decade causes the appearance of a new policy borrowing as a kind of a many-sided or an international phenomenon. Now processes of adaptation and localization of the ideas of Common European Framework of Reference, derived from Europe, are clearly observed in Russia as well.

The starting point and purpose of higher education in contemporary Russia is to enable future teachers to bring up their students as patriots, to develop their national identity and to prepare them for mobility and communication in a multilingual and pluricultural world. E.V. Voevoda (2009) observes that it is necessary to organize good language education to prepare professionals who might be well qualified for the world market to promote products and services, to defend national interests, sometimes by means of a foreign language (p.17).

Our research falls within the area of intercultural teachers' education. The theoretical framework of the research is based on humanistic, axiological and culturological methodological approaches, which provide the theoretical foundation for understanding teachers' intercultural competence.

The aim of this research is to provide more theoretical knowledge and understanding on the nature of international competence in teachers' work. We are going to concentrate on intercultural competence as a theoretical phenomenon. Intercultural competence as part of teachers' professionalism has not been researched very much in Russian context. This research aims at providing additional knowledge and understanding to existing ideas and theories on intercultural competence in teachers' work.

Intercultural concepts and theory

The hypothesis of the research is that teachers' intercultural competence has its specific features determined by peculiarities of teachers' professionalism. Teachers' intercultural competence is not very much related to specific skills and knowledge (physics, history or maths). It is more concerned to values and attitudes, modes of behavior. For example, Finnish Professor K. Jokikkoko (2010) offers her model of intercultural competence, in which she talks about the interrelated aspects that represent attitudes, knowledge and understanding, as well as behaviors. According to K. Jokikkoko, intercultural competence should not be considered separately from the professional activity of teachers, it is a holistic approach that covers all areas of the professional work of the teacher. She offers that in an intercultural context professional teachers do possess intercultural competence. On top of that, M. Fleming (2009) confirms, "Intercultural competence in its various conceptions and models implies not just a commitment to knowledge and understanding for its own sake, but critically to forms of behavior" (p. 1-12). At the same time, M. R. Hammer (2009) defines intercultural thinking as "the ability to rethink cultural change and adapt accordingly to the behavioral context" (p. 203-218).

It's natural that teachers' intercultural competence is perceived more as a humanistic attitude to people, life and diversity, which guides a person's thinking and behaviour rather

than ability to perform something well in an intercultural environment. It's logical that a teacher is seen as a manager of dialogue of cultures; a teacher demonstrates a positive attitude to different cultures, presented by the students; a teacher is a humanist. Moreover, appreciating the dialogical and intercultural encounter, as the potential for viewing social problems, P. Holmes and S. Ganesh (2011) offer that it entails a fresh, new and creative ways to make a decision. In our opinion, the ability to intercultural dialogue implies ownership professional intercultural competences.

The methodology of teaching foreign languages and foreign researchers engaged in the formation of intercultural competence of students. One model is the model of intercultural competence E. Phillips (2001), in which the study of a foreign language emphasis on language skills, but no attention is paid cognition studied culture and create a positive attitude to it. E. Phillips offers that students must learn to explore the culture through observation, description and proof of hypotheses.

One of Europe's leading scientists that develop intercultural competence issues is well-known British researcher Michael Byram. M. Byram (2008) characterizes intercultural competence as a set of five elements: the ability to make opening and have curiosity (have an understanding of their culture and a willingness to open other cultures); ability to interpret (the ability to interpret phenomena, events and facts from another culture, to explain and compare the peculiarities of their culture); knowledge of social groups and their ability to live in their own country and the country of his interlocutors; ability to acquire new knowledge about the culture and the ability to operate knowledge, skills and attitudes in the actual practice of intercultural communication; ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of these criteria to assess the prospects of development of their own and other cultures.

According to M. Byram (2013), the aim of teaching languages for intercultural competence includes linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence in language, combined with intercultural competences in the discovery, analysis, comparison and critique of cultures.

Paige (1993) refers to the importance of "training the trainers", which "require students to make a quantum leap from a basic understanding of intercultural experience and understanding of cross-cultural skills to the point where they will be able to apply the basic knowledge and skills as a teacher intercultural" (p. 169 – 199). Similarly, Paige and Goode (2009) argue that international education professionals have an important mentoring role to play in enabling the intercultural development of their students, and set out to equip such professions with a set of useful resources from which to develop their understanding of intercultural competence and their role as mentors.

By the way, M. Barrett (2011) says that it currently requires a significant expansion of materials that teachers can use to increase the intercultural competence of their students. There is a need to develop new technologies that will be adapted to take into account the specific circumstances and cultural contexts in which students live.

Educational system and teacher's role in Russia

Obviously, it's not enough that teachers are interculturally competent themselves. Teachers can effect thinking and action of the next generations. They should also foster the intercultural development in their students. Teachers have the opportunity to effect their students' awareness, open the world for them, and to teach them to critically analyse global phenomenon. Intercultural competence is necessary for teachers because as humanistic professionals they are responsible for personal and academic growth of all their students, regardless of background, culture, language, religion, ethnicity, gender and so on. Teachers should not choose whose learning to support and whose not to. Teachers' professionalism

should be developed and strengthened under multicultural conditions. Naturally, our research is based on the idea that intercultural competence is an essential part of teachers' professionalism and its development is a very long and complicated process that lasts a whole lifetime. So, L.K. Grebyonkina and O.V. Eremkina (2011) the main characteristic feature of the professional competence is its implementation with a focus on the future. Hence, it must be based on a systematic independent, lifelong learning, focused on the future, on training and retraining for the sake of self-development (p. 96).

It's proved that intercultural competence has been studied from various perspectives and it always presupposes positive attitude to diversity, as well as respect, understanding and empathy. Many researchers in Russia presume that intercultural competence entails a lot more than mastering a foreign language. Therefore, considering the problem of intercultural competence development, L.P. Kostikova (2014) says that modern understanding of the intercultural competence includes the ability to use "soft power" as an innovative effective instrument of intercultural dialogue (p.261).

Considering the development of the intercultural communicative competence in learning a foreign language and culture, G.V. Elizarova (2005) states that the special nature of this competence based on knowledge and skills, the ability to carry out cross-cultural communication through the creation of common values for communicants reach a positive outcome for both parts of communication. Intercultural communicative competence has no analogy with the communicative competence of native speakers. To develop intercultural communicative competence means to achieve linguistic identity, which will allow the communicants to go beyond their own culture and to acquire new culture without losing their own cultural identity (p. 236).

Teachers' education in Russia is responding to growing multiculturalism and internationalization of higher education in different ways. Typically, there are a few separate courses on multicultural issues in teacher education curricula. There are also teachers' training departments providing educational programs with two different qualifications, one of which is English, for example Mathematics and English, Physics and English, etc. On the other hand, Ryazan State University named for S. Yesenin gradually introduces a two-level higher education system with a 4-year bachelor degree and 2-year master degree instead of a 5-year specialist "diploma". The Department of History and International Relations offers its students a five-year-old educational programme where History and English are two equal directions. It aims at providing future teachers with the intercultural competence that they will need either for their work at school or research. Global issues, intercultural competences are integrated into academic courses of the department, students' research and extracurricular activities.

Conclusion

Thus after carrying out a comparative description and analysis it became possible to arrive at the following conclusions. A teacher cannot become interculturally competent within one in-service course, by traveling or even by a five-year-course of academic pre-service education. However, internationalization of higher education plays a significant role in this process. It has been more and more recognized in Russia, that all teachers need intercultural courses to be an essential part of both pre-service and in-service education.

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