Methodology of Diagnostics of Interethnic Relations and Ethnosocial Processes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to research the methodological approaches to the study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes. The analysis of the literature was conducted in three main areas: 1) the theoretical and methodological issues of organizing the research of inter-ethnic relations, allowing to highlight the current methodological approaches and principles of organizing such studies; 2) studies of ethno-social processes in multiethnic societies, which determined the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs; 3) the current state of inter-ethnic relations in different regions of Russia, which has allowed to develop criteria for determining the areas in which such researches will be most topical. The data systematization and conceptual synthesis method have contributed to the development of a new methodological basis for inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes research in modern Russia. The developed methodological basis will allow to conduct a comprehensive, high-quality and timely evaluation of the processes of ethno-social and inter-ethnic relations. Such diagnostics, in turn, will contribute to the effective prevention of interethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic regions of modern Russia.

Introduction

The activation of processes of ethnic differentiation is among the specifics of political and social development of contemporary Russia. Many researches mark out, that nowadays the ethnic and regional identity of Russians dominate and determine the character of social-political relations more than all-civil identity (Avksentyev & Aksymov, 2010; Ismagilov, 2009). Such situation may be caused by a complicated set of factors on the global, all-Russian and regional levels.

Such manifestations of globalization, as institutionalization of international policy structures, integration of national economics, spread of unified mass culture, enforcement of migration streams, have inevitably lead to the destruction of territorial and social-cultural borders, former markers of ethnic identity. The actualization of 'local' ethnic and religious self-consciousness of population became the appropriate consequence in this case. Along with understanding of problem of 'smearing' of own ethnos, ethnic communities try to preserve cultural originality, traditional life style and social practices with the

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help of territorial separation, back to traditional ways of economy, strengthening the positions of native language and law restrictions (Held et al., 1999).

Problems of interethnic and inter confessional relations are always sharp and actual for all global community, nations and states. In contemporary world, such problems became topical due to the fact that there is no such country, which is homogeneous in ethnic and cultural composition. The internationalization of the world labor market and the interdependence of national economics, formation of multi-polar world and the tendency of certain geopolitical actors to influence the ethnic-political situation in some regions has led to the sharpening of traditional inter-ethnic and inter-confessional tension and emergence of new inter-ethnic conflicts (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Denisova, 2007; Hjorth, 2016). The evident character and acuteness of the given problems, their global spread and influence on ethnic-social and ethnic-political problems cause the deserving attention of scientific community and various research structures.

Literature Review

Contemporary global social-economic processes (conjunction of markets, migration, interethnic conflicts and demographic decrease in many countries) found their own reflection in the actual problems of modern Russian society. However, a specific geopolitical condition of Russia, historically multinational type of the state, Soviet heritage and contradictory conditions of reforms in the last decades make the preservation of the country's integrity and forming of a unite Russian identity one of the most important tasks (Omelchenko et al., 2015). But we should keep in mind that the diversity of nation by national, ethnic and confessional characteristics together with problems of poverty and unequal distribution of natural and financial resources between regions create an acute problem of the spreading of nationalist and separatist moods among citizens (Sibley, 2013; Hřebíčková & Graf, 2014).

At present researches note not only stable growth in the number of followers of nationalist organizations, but also in the actualization of xenophobic attitudes among the population (Tishkov & Kirsriev, 2007; Hřebíčková & Graf, 2014). This problem obtains a special topicality in connection to the increased necessity of attraction labor migrants into the country (Summut, 2015). Labor migrants often become general objects of ethnic enmity for the adherents of nationalist ideology (Maximova, Avdeeva & Maximov, 2013).

It is clear that the formation of civil society in modern Russian conditions is closely connected to the increased self-identity (Rizhova, 2011; Omelchenko et al., 2015). Active migration of representatives of separate ethnos and active internal migration could be considered promoting to the emergence of ethnic contradictories (Held et al., 1999). From this point of view, most Russian regions are potential zones of risk of interethnic tension. The measures by governmental bodies obtain a great importance in solution of such contradictories. Timely reaction of government is closely connected to the escalation and regulation of conflicts, provision of national peace and agreement, but nowadays there are many problems in this sphere. All this requires a detailed research.

'Polyethnic' is one of the general social and demographic characteristics of the most part of Russian regions. The given specific of regions is a result of migration processes, topical until nowadays. The lowering of Russian culture's potential in such conditions objectively provokes an increase on the level of contradictories inside the ethnosocial system up to the stage of open conflict. That is why developing of new approaches to analyze different inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations and processes is very topical, as well as the diagnostics and revelation of creative (positive) fields of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction, scientific understanding of results of corresponding researches and their transformation into the system of social values.

Fundamental scientific problems nowadays are connected to the development of methodological base for research of interethnic and inter confessional relations in correlation with social, economic and cultural processes in conditions of national, confession and ethnic diversity of contemporary Russia and its regions.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyze modern methodological approaches to the study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes, to be able to design the comprehensive studies of ethnic relations and prevent ethnic conflicts beforehand.

Research questions

The following question was directing and structuring in our study: Which modern methodological approaches to the study of ethno-social processes allow the most effective evaluation of inter-ethnic relations and prevention of ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic regions of Russia?

Methods

To analyze the modern methodological approaches to the study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes, we used the method of systematic analysis of the literature on theoretical and methodological issues in sociology and the research of ethnic relations. We also analyzed the literature, describing the studies of ethno-social processes in multi-ethnic societies, to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs. Finally, the literature analysis included works, reflecting the current state of ethno-social processes in different regions of Russia, in order to determine the criteria for the selection of areas in which further research would be most relevant. Methods of systematization, conceptual synthesis and theoretical modeling have allowed to develop a new comprehensive and relevant methodological basis for the research of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes in the regions of modern Russia.

Results

The analysis of theoretical literature on the methodology of studying inter-ethnic relations have shown that the system-integrative approach, structural

functionalism and symbolic interactionism are currently the most relevant approaches to the study of the stated problem. An effective and comprehensive case study must be based on the principles, embodying these approaches in practice. The detailed information on the results of this phase of the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Effective methodological approaches to the study and evaluation of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes.

№	Methodological approach	Inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes research principles	Approach representatives, whose works present the principles
1.	System-integrative approach	the principle of system-integrative approach to the analysis of social phenomena allows considering problems of formation of interethnic and inter-confessional relations and processes in complex	S. J. Schwartz et al. (2014)
2.	cultural-centric paradigm	the most promising tendency – to combine the cultural-centric paradigm and socio-centric approaches, functional-activity, social-organizational and institutional theories	P. A. Sorokin (1970)
3.	structural functionalism	Principles of structural functionalism are used during the work. Based on the given approach, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations would be considered from the point of view of stability of social system, and ethnic conflicts – as a phenomenon, destroying the stability of social life and the need in control and regulation. This approach makes analysis of interethnic and inter confessional interactions a key point of view	A. Giddens (1976)
4.	symbolic interactionism	Principles of symbolic interactionism, which consider mechanisms of direct interactions between individuals, will be useful in the research. Application of the given approach allows considering the relation of a human to the representatives of 'alien' ethnos. The given relation could be the background for the emergence of ethnic conflicts in everyday life	H. Blumer (1986)

5.	sociology of interethnic relations and ethnic sociology	The tendency to build a research strategy based on general categories of sociological analysis on the following topics: inter-ethnic relations, inter-confessional relations, social values, value attitudes, interactions, social mechanism	T. Parsons (1991), Zh. Denisova (2007)

Based on a concrete task, the scale of planned researches is connected to obtaining the global results in the field of sociology of interethnic relations and ethnic sociology and, determined by the basic component, directed on the development of methodological bases of new scientific understanding of different inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations and processes. Still, the local context is very important for this kind of research, especially given the multi-ethnic composition of the population and a history of inter-ethnic conflicts in the region (Adisa, Rosli & Khairie, 2015). Therefore, given the specificity of ethno-social processes in modern Russia, we have developed a set of rules and specific objectives that should guide researchers in this field.

The study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes in Russian regions should focus on the following tasks:

– the development of methodological bases of a new scientific understanding of various inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations and processes in conditions of interethnic society of modern Russia, based on a complex approach;

– the development of theoretical model of social mechanism of formation of interethnic and inter confessional interaction in regions of modern Russia;

– formation of methodological bases for evaluation the peculiarities of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction in contemporary Russian regions, the development of indexes and indicators, connected to the peculiarities of positive and negative signs of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction in different regions of Russia;

– realization of a complex and differentiated evaluation of conditions of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction in different ethnic and confessional groups of population in modern Russian regions;

– revelation of creative (positive) fields of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction;

– formation of methodological bases for evaluating, developing indexes and indicators of value attitudes, accepted and understood by representatives of scientific-expert community on the stable and harmonic development of Russia and its regions in conditions of national, confessional and ethnocultural diversity;

– revelation of unified value attitudes, accepted and shared by representatives of scientific-expert community on the stable and harmonic development of Russia and its regions in conditions of national, confessional and ethnocultural diversity;

– the development of scientific-based system of monitoring different indexes of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations in regions of contemporary Russia.

In our opinion it is important for a comprehensive assessment of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes to interview not only the population, but also groups of experts. Such experts can be the representatives of bodies of legislative, executive government, representatives of public noncommercial organizations, scientific and pedagogical community. Expert questioning should focus on revelation of unite value attitudes, accepted and shared by scientific-expert community on problems of stable harmonic development of Russia and its regions in condition of national, confessional and ethnic-cultural diversity.

The described methodological approaches and principles should be embodied in the qualitative questionnaires, allowing a complex assessment of the ethno-social processes in the regions. A sociological questionnaire should consist of the following units:

1) Evaluation of condition of inter-ethnic relations in regions of modern Russia. Questions should be concentrated on the information about the character of relations between representatives of different ethnos in regions, vector of their transformation. Here we consider the questions about the influence of region's bordering position on the character of interethnic relations and wellbeing of aboriginal population.

2) Presence of ethnic conflicts. Here we consider questions about the emergence of ethnic conflicts in a region: reasons, dynamics, spheres of appearance, factors that provoke the conflict.

3) Evaluation of the system of governmental regulation. Experts would evaluate the efficiency of governmental bodies in regulation and solution of conflicts, to determine the weak sides of the governmental system and suggest measures for increasing the efficiency of the system.

4) Individual experience of positive and negative interethnic and inter confessional interaction. The last block of questions allows explaining the peculiarities of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction in personal surroundings and the strategies of solving conflicts.

In planning researches on ethnic sociology, it is very important to consider the area of surveys and local cultural characteristics (Schwartz et al., 2014;. Adisa, Rosli & Khairie, 2015). Modern Russia has a few areas that could be described as problematic in terms of inter-ethnic relations and the likelihood of inter-ethnic conflicts. Partly this is due to historical reasons (Tishkov & Kirsriev, 2007), and partly - to globalization and migration (especially labor migration) (Maximova, Avdeeva & Maximov, 2013). In general, we can conclude that the study of ethno-social processes is particularly relevant when comparing regions, different by ethnic composition, social and economic status.

In the context of modern Russia, we believe it is important to keep the following rules in mind when choosing the region for the study. First of all, despite a certain trouble, there is a necessity to divide the vast Russian area into regions according to certain types. Secondly, all subjects of the Russian

Federation differ from each other by the diversity of regional problems in social and economic development and influencing factors. This requires a typology of regions, which will allow to systemize differences of social-economic situation and divide types of subjects of the Russian Federation. Such typology is hierarchic and includes general differentiated indexes. The choice of indexes, of course, is subjective, but depends on expert and analytical experience. There are two such components: 1) level of economic development of a region and economic condition of households; 2) development of the territory. Based on these criteria, we get a typology, built in the system of coordinates with four 'extreme points' with the following subjects of the Russian Federation: 1) 'reach' and developed; 2) 'reach' and weakly developed; 3) 'poor' and developed; 4) 'poor' and weakly developed. By having such system of coordinates it is easier to structure other social and economic characteristics of regions. One more component is important in sampling regions – their ethnic composition.

Discussion and Conclusion

Consistent with a number of studies (Ismagilov, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2014; Adisa, Rosli & Khairie, 2015), the current study represents a set of methodological principles, defining the qualitative and comprehensive study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes in modern multi-ethnic regions. This study concludes that cultural-centric and system-integrative approaches, structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, sociology of ethnic relations and ethnic sociology form the methodological basis for qualitative and efficient research of ethno-social processes in modern society (Table 1). The study also analyzes the basic problems faced by sociologists, studying ethno-social processes in modern Russia. This is especially relevant for regions with a long history of inter-ethnic tension and regions with high levels of labor migration (Tishkov & Kirsriev, 2007; Maximova, Avdeeva & Maximov, 2013). Among the main objectives are the development of theoretical models of social mechanisms of inter-ethnic and inter-religious cooperation in the regions of modern Russia, the detection of positive experience in the history of such interaction, the review and improvement of the existing methodological basis for assessing the actual ethno-social processes in order to improve the quality of future research.

Our findings suggest that it is important to carry out opinion polls, not only among multi-ethnic population of the regions, but also among experts from government agencies, public non-profit organizations, scientific and educational community. Independent expert evaluation allows a better understanding of the situation in a particular region and leads to the conclusion about the effectiveness of the functioning institutions in assessing and changing the ethnic relations and preventing ethnic conflicts. Considering the obtained study results, we also emphasize the methods of selection of regions and areas to conduct interviews. According to A. Bisin et al. (2010), ethnic identity is more important and more strongly affects the relationship between people in mixed societies than in homogeneous. Therefore, we developed a list of criteria for assessing the regions included both socio-economic and demographic indicators and data on the ethnic composition of the population. Given the current effects

of modernization and the change of values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), we conclude that the need for a such integrated approach to the study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes.

Implications and Recommendations

The implications and recommendations for future studies are as follows. First, to take into account the international experience on the methodology of sociological researches. Secondly, in the planning of research, it is always necessary to take into consideration the regional specifics, the history of the past and the likelihood of future social (including ethnic) conflicts. In our analysis of methodological approaches we started with both of these assumptions and developed a comprehensive methodology for the study of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-social processes in multiethnic regions of modern Russia. We suppose that the suggested methodic toolkit will provide the necessary deepness of the developing of main aspects of task, connected with the developing of effective theoretical-methodological and technological approaches to the study of interethnic and inter confessional relations and processes, their significance for diagnostics and revelation of creative (positive) fields of interethnic and inter confessional interaction in contemporary Russian regions.

A properly planned and conducted qualitative study of ethno-social processes will provide reliable and comprehensive results (Held et al, 1999;. Summut, 2015). This will allow not only to diversely evaluate the current situation in the region, but also to track the areas of potential conflict beforehand and thus will contribute to the prevention of such conflicts (Sibley, 2013). The assessment methodology of ethno-social processes, developed in this article, will allow researchers to comprehensively approach the assessment of issues of inter-ethnic relations and prevent ethnic conflicts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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