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## The Problem of Ethnic Tolerance Development among Students

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to understanding of the importance of the formation of a positive ethnic identity among students and the development of their ethnic tolerance. The formation of tolerance is considered as a key task of forming a full-fledged personality. To identify the degree of tolerance a study among full-time North-Eastern federal university (NEFU) students is conducted. The degree of ethnic tolerance is assessed on the base of the following criteria: the level of "negativity" in relation to one's own and other ethnic groups, the threshold of emotional response to other ethnic environment, and the severity of aggressive and hostile reactions to other groups. It is revealed that the majority of students of the NEFU have a positive ethnic identity and are inclined to tolerance but there is some percentage of students who are not so positive. It is concluded that the preventive activity of the university should be manifested in educational and extracurricular activities, focused on the formation of tolerant experience, and in the multicultural education as a method of developing ethnic tolerance.

**Keywords:** tolerance, multicultural education, ethnic identity, interethnic relations.



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## Introduction

The Russian Federation is characterized by a multinational structure of the population. According to the latest census, there are more than 190 ethnic groups living in it. An important condition for the prospective development of a multicultural society is the peaceful coexistence of various ethnic groups and their representatives that is projected onto political, economic, cultural and other spheres of social life.

Modern ethnocultural and ethnopolitical realities of Russia are designated not only by productive inter-ethnic interaction, intercultural exchange, but also by actions of nationalism, xenophobia. Young people often become the participants of such actions.

The internationalization of education, the active entry of Russia into the world educational space, on the one hand, has a number of positive effects, on the other hand, gives rise to a number of problems. One of the most acute problems is the growth of inter-ethnic tensions in the student environment. The search for psychological and pedagogical factors of reducing inter-ethnic tensions leads to an understanding of the importance of the formation of a positive ethnic identity among students and the development of their ethnic tolerance.

Tolerance, as we know, is a decisive factor that reduces the situation of violence, discrimination, human rights violations (Tolstikova, 2012). Therefore, the formation of tolerance should be considered as a key task of forming a full-fledged personality, necessary and useful for modern society.

Modern young graduates are required not only to possess theoretical knowledge, but also to form abilities of working in a team and have tolerant qualities.

It should be noted that purposeful activity in this direction is almost not conducted in higher education. Therefore, the development of skills of tolerant communication with various participants of the educational process occurs spontaneously. A student needs specific knowledge, abilities and skills to cultivate tolerance, and it is important for the teaching staff to organize conditions contributing to forming of tolerant interpersonal relationships in the student group, in the course, in everyday life.

Today students of different nationalities are studying in the North-Eastern federal university (NEFU), not only from Russia, but also from other countries.

Therefore, it is extremely necessary to develop multicultural educational characteristics and upbringing that contribute to the formation of a socially active multicultural person.

Multicultural education may be understood as the process of formation of a person capable of active and effective life activity in multinational and multicultural environment with a developed sense of understanding and respect for other cultures, and the ability to live in peace and harmony with people of different nationalities, races, beliefs. Multicultural education is a pedagogical process in which two or more cultures are represented, differing by language, ethnic, national or racial basis (Dzhurinsky, 2002).

Teachers, as a rule, try to advocate the formation of tolerance among students during interpersonal communication. However, in everyday practice this aspect of education is not given enough attention. Therefore, there are manifestations of ethnocentrism, belittling in

the personal communication of the values of different culture representatives of another ethnos.

In connection with the foregoing, the author conducted a study among full-time NEFU students. The main method of gathering information was a survey in the form of a questionnaire.

In total, during the survey in 2017, 150 students from different institutes were enrolled. To identify the degree of tolerance, a technique developed by G. Soldatova "Types of Ethnic Identity" was used (Soldatova, 2008).

The degree of ethnic tolerance is assessed on the base of the following criteria: the level of "negativity" in relation to one's own and other ethnic groups, the threshold of emotional response to other ethnic environment, the severity of aggressive and hostile reactions to other groups.

Thus, ethnocentrism is inherent in 3.0% of students, and ethnofanatism, which is an extreme form, is noted in 2.5% of students. Ethno-isolationism is characteristic of 2% of respondents.

Ethno-egoism, ethno-isolationism and ethnofanatism are the stages of hyperbolization of ethnic identity that means the emergence of discriminatory forms of interethnic relations. In interethnic interaction, hyper-identity manifests itself in various forms of ethnic intolerance: from irritation arising as a reaction to the presence of members of other ethnic groups, to upholding a policy of restricting their rights and opportunities, aggressive and violent actions against another group, and even genocide (Soldatova, 2000). Thus, 7.5% of students at NEFU to some degree or other experience intolerant feelings towards other ethnic groups and their cultures.

It should be stressed that 85% of respondents have a normal ethnic identity (a combination of a positive attitude towards their own people and a positive attitude towards other peoples). The rest of the respondents demonstrated indifference and erosion of ethnic identity (ethnonigilism and ethnic indifference) – 5.5%.

As a result of the survey, it was revealed that more than 85% of students did not experience bad attitude towards themselves because of their nationality. However, 5% of respondents encountered openly negative attitudes towards themselves from the side of representatives of other nationalities.

However, 15% of respondents, one way or another, faced manifestations of hostility on national basis. 70% of students met with such manifestations of intolerance as offensive publications in the press, ethnic moral humiliation in the street, household level, etc.

In recent years, the number of youth nationalist groups has significantly increased in Russia, and respondents were asked to answer the question of how they relate to the emergence of such organizations. The results indicate that 5% want to join such organizations, and 7% of students support the ideas of various nationalist organizations and movements, but the majority of the students surveyed do not approve of such nationalist formations.

To reveal a negative attitude towards representatives of other nationalities is the question: "Do you experience irritation or hostility towards representatives of other

nationalities?" 5 % of all respondents answered "yes, I feel" and 10 % - "sometimes I feel". If we sum up these figures, then it turns out that 15% of people of other nationalities are disliked by representatives of other nationalities to one degree or another. "Do not experience" such feelings 85% of respondents.

An interesting fact is that a third of respondents found it difficult to answer the question about the reasons for their dislike. The reasons for the intolerant attitude were different. For instance, in the first place stood such factors as "inappropriate behavior", "lifestyle" (aggressiveness, cohesion, obtrusiveness and others), that is most likely associated with differences in upbringing and in the national culture. In addition, such reasons as unattractive appearance, untidiness, aesthetic features, etc. were mentioned. To a lesser extent, such reasons were called, as "they consider themselves as masters here", "they oppress other nationalities". In fact, many students cannot even understand the reasons for their dislike. Their intolerance was formed under the influence of the media, the environment, and the family.

The opinion of respondents about the possible causes of inter-ethnic conflicts was learned. Most often indicated the presence of national and racial prejudices (38%); differences in education and culture (28%); differences in mentality (21%); individual dislike (10%). Some believe that the cause of conflicts is in the difference of religion (3%). The results indicate that the overwhelming majority of the students surveyed have stereotypical ideas about representatives of different ethnic groups.

Most of the reasons for stereotypes are obvious.

First, it is the competition of citizens and ethnic communities that is aggravated in the conditions of social, economic, political, ideological and moral transitional period, as well as in the context of the global economic and financial crisis.

Second, it is the inability and unwillingness of individuals (regardless of ethnicity) to organize and structure their lives in the conditions of the highest level of information, the widest range of professional activities, and leisure opportunities, that reduce ethnic markers and bring supra-ethnic values to the forefront of public life.

Third, it is unprofessionalism, sincere delusions, and, sometimes, cynicism of authorities in the sphere of management of interethnic, national and federal relations.

Fourth, it is immaturity and passivity, indifference, and, often, the targeted ethnocentric demagogy of certain groups and citizens (Astvatsaturova, 2012, p. 81).

The opinion "Any means are good for protecting the interests of own people" is "fully agreed" and "rather agreed" by 25% of students. 5% of respondents are ready to humiliate a person because of his/her nationality, and "most likely not" 45%. The answers to the question "Would you be able to apply physical violence to a person because of his nationality?" were distributed as follows: Yes, of course, I constantly do it - 0%; Yes, perhaps - 0%; Most likely not - 18%; No, never - 82%.

In addition, respondents were asked to name measures, the adoption of which would reduce tensions in interethnic relations.

More than half of respondents (65%) as a necessary measure to prevent interethnic conflicts and create a favorable interethnic situation in the university consider the need to

strengthen the educational activities of the institution aimed at the formation of ethnic and religious tolerance. And measures such as “telling about the culture and customs of other peoples ”and“ be kinder to each other ”,“ strengthen legal control and toughen penalties for inciting ethnic hatred ”,“ work with ethnic diasporas ”, etc. Most students believe that it is necessary to hold seminars and circles devoted to different nationalities in the university, organize more inter-ethnic events that promote cohesion, familiarize foreign students with the history and culture of the peoples of Russia. Some respondents consider it necessary to toughen penalties for inciting ethnic hatred, up to expulsion from the university. According to 35% of respondents, effective measures to prevent interethnic conflicts can be a combination of social and economic measures - raising the level and quality of life of the population, creating jobs, overcoming unemployment.

35% of students are ready to marry with a representative of any nationality, 45% can enter into inter-ethnic marriage, but not with any nationality, and 20% do not see as a companion of life a person of another nationality.

Questions related to religious tolerance deserve special attention in the multicultural environment. Most of the students surveyed believe that religion has an integrative function. Thus, 75% agree with the statement “It is easier for people of the same religion to understand each other.”

In connection with the above, there is a need to regulate the behavior of youth groups in the context of overcoming intolerance and extremism through the formation of tolerance through multicultural education.

The main objectives of multicultural education:

- Deep and comprehensive mastering by students of the culture of their country that is a prerequisite for integration into other cultures.
- Formation of students' ideas about the diversity of cultures in the world and Russia, fostering a positive attitude towards cultural differences that ensure the progress of humanity and the conditions for self-realization of the individual.
- Creating conditions for the integration of students into the cultures of other nations.
- Development of skills and abilities of productive interaction with carriers of different cultures.
- Educating students in the spirit of peace, tolerance, humane interpersonal communication (Kirsanova, 2010, p.10).

Thus, multicultural education must meet the following requirements:

- include humanistic ideas in the educational material;
- disseminate information about the unique distinctive features in the cultures of the peoples of Russia and the world;
- reveal common elements in the cultures of nations that allow them to live in peace and harmony;

- to promote students' familiarization with world culture, understanding the interdependence of countries and peoples in the modern world, taking into account the globalization process.

Therefore, in the modern educational process it is necessary to pay attention to modern national relations, the basics of state national policy, the principles and directions of state regulation of national, federal and inter-ethnic relations.

The mastering of this problematic by students contributes to the development of a patriotic position, the prevention of negative ethnic stereotypes, the acquisition of knowledge in the field of inter-ethnic communication, the spread of tolerance, and the acquisition of political socialization skills and social adaptation to the socio-political realities of modern times (Astvatsaturova, 2012).

### Conclusion

Analysis of survey data leads to the following general conclusion: despite the fact that the majority of students of the NEFU have a positive ethnic identity and are inclined to tolerance, some percentage of students is not so positive about other people. Therefore, the preventive activity of the university should be manifested in educational and extracurricular activities, focused on the formation of tolerant experience, and in the multicultural education as a method of developing ethnic tolerance.

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