



## DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCIES IN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC EDUCATION

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### **Abstract:**

The article addresses the scientific problem of developing a multi-paradigmatic model for learning in a multicultural environment. The components of this model are conceptual, didactic, empirical, practically applied. The context in which the multi-paradigmatic model was developed is the real multicultural environment that exists in the academic student community. In the study, the multicultural environment is considered as an academic and school multicultural environment. In the academic multicultural environment, students develop skills to communicate with their own cultural differences - to accept and integrate them; to combine them with each other. At the multicultural classroom level, students develop process management skills in the classroom. A didactic technology for the development of multicultural skills built in a simulated pedagogical environment is presented. The article also presents an empirical study aimed at exploring the attitudes and pedagogical behavior of students placed in a controlled simulated environment.

**Keywords:** multiparadigm, higher education, multicultural education

### **1. Introduction**

The problem of multicultural education is not new in the scientific space. Its interpretation reflects the development of society, the changes taking place in borders and nations, the meeting of religious cultures. In the cultural diversity of the European Union, economic and social development leads to the creation of international teams, whose members are carriers not only of different religions, but also of different cultural behaviors - Eastern and Western European. The opportunity to be a member of an international team in countries such as China, Japan, India, South Africa is not only an economic and social challenge - it is a cultural metamorphosis in the personal space of the individual. The primary source of this fact is the individual himself, the bearer of the

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difference, which places multicultural competencies in a different and far more complex context. Contemporary authors such as Matosek, M. Prokopowicz, D. (2018) recognize that cultural dilemmas *"can be an obstacle to interoperability. Knowledge of partners and sensitivity to cultural heritage is useful in any dimension of cross-border cooperation"*. And not only that - in modern society the free movement of people and goods is a fact. The settlement of foreigners in a number of countries develops multiculturalism to a much wider extent than its domestic national presence. Here is an example: Bulgaria is a country with a traditional population of Christians and Muslims, living in understanding and having a single social and economic life. In this bi-cultural space today they declare their existence - Russians (with their Eastern Orthodoxy), Chinese (with their main religion Buddhism, Daim), families of Arab works (with a serious religion Islam), British (certainly the religion of Catholicism, English, Protestant) presented on African pages. There are many mixed marriages in which the interaction of cultural identities gives birth to a new rising generation with different attitudes towards a multicultural society - for them it is the natural society. The interactions in the multicultural communities considered in this way are a challenge to the pedagogical theory and practice. The preparation of student pedagogues to teach knowledge, morals, values of the new generation requires from academic teachers a new concept, a new technology to multiculturalism. They require the construction of a reflective research environment for the development of multicultural competencies. Moreover, today's students are a product of this new contemporary multiculturalism.

## **2. Pedagogical orientations for multicultural learning in an academic environment**

Garliardi, R. points out that *"as a first priority, teacher education needs to be reorganized to improve teachers' ability to teach in a multicultural context"* (Garliardi, R., 1995, p. 1). Conceptually, multiculturalism is already seen within the broad boundaries of the transnational and globalist dimensions. (Kostova - Chavdarova, S., 2011). Sotshangane, N. (2002) develops the idea of a *"new paradigm in the model of globalization" in which a multicultural society will continue to exist. The degree to which multicultural academic education succeeds depends to a large extent on the attitudes and skills of university professors to manage multicultural processes in a reflective research environment. The multicultural competencies that student pedagogues acquire develop not in a certain academic discipline, but in a community academic environment. Reflective environment in which formal and non-formal learning form a research simulation field for the management of social multicultural competencies and on this basis the pedagogical ones develop. Pedagogical competence is considered by Shivacheva-Pineda in two important projections, which have a constructive significance for the pedagogical multicultural consciousness of the student - "the formation of a value attitude to the teaching profession" and the development of professional pedagogical self-awareness in students"* (Shivacheva-Pineda, 2019). The academic multicultural environment is perceived as an environment that leads to *"enrichment, expansion of personal potential, through the acquisition of new experience gained by the ethnic group, nation, subgroup, to which there has been no affiliation or lack of interest"* (Gerdjikova, N., 2019). This learning environment has the

characteristics of academic autonomy and integrity, non-violent communication and tolerance.

The first level for the development of multicultural competencies in an academic environment is the mental, intellectual level. Important for this level is the opinion of Ivanova and Temnikova (2018) that "*the discovery of opportunities for synchronization of the doctrine of the intellect with its developing learning is emerging as one of the important problems of modern pedagogical science.*" As a continuation of this orientation, Borisova T. points to the idea of reviewing and rethinking teaching methods, ways to make the modern student "*read, think, understand and appreciate what is read.*" (Borisova, T., 2018). Borisova, T. (2017) also puts the issue of "reading comprehension" at the heart of the overall communicative concept. In the context of multiculturalism, reading comprehension implies not only "what the author wanted to say", but also how students interpret the artistic idea, whether they can derive from it that pedagogical multicultural code that transmits it to adolescents valued and relevant to modern times.

The second level is related to the pragmatic pedagogical technologies of multicultural knowledge. The design of pedagogical technology "*implies the choice of optimal for the specific conditions system of pedagogical concepts, principles, approaches, techniques, tools*" (Ivanov, Kalinova, 2017). Zlateva, A., (2006) operationalizes the pedagogical technology by adding the integrative possibilities of the teaching tasks in order to develop more complete and concrete ideas. An important substantive aspect in the development of multicultural competencies is found in her understanding that "*accelerating the aesthetic education and training of student educators can partially correct the gaps in this area*" (Zlateva, A., 2013). It can form aesthetic thoughts and tastes and to achieve the formation of the emotional world of the young person (posthumous) The development of multicultural competencies through art is one of the most effective ways to form a pedagogical multicultural consciousness in students. The acquaintance with works of fine arts by different authors (in culture and religion), characteristic for different periods of world and social development, not only develops the multicultural perception, but also expands the general basic worldview of the students. An important role in this level is played by the "*representative concept*" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), related to the different ways of presenting thoughts and feelings, of "*exactly what we mean*", through language, art, gesture, dance, etc. Research in the arts offers many new forms of representation of thoughts, ideas and concepts, such as: literary genres of impressionist writing, autobiographical writing, short stories, poetry, ethno-drama, screenwriting and fiction; images such as movies, drawing, sketching, dancing and photography. Many alternative ways of thinking are revealed. The multicultural problems that are considered in the learning process can be subjected to interpretive and critical reflection and this requires alternative ways of thinking - metaphorical, dialectical, inductive, poetic and reflective thinking. By introducing students to models of representation and reflection on multicultural knowledge in the process of academic learning, it is possible to: make sense of the developing multicultural experience; for the interpretation of the multicultural problem and the enrichment of the context. These elements enrich the possibilities of the interpretive and critical concept in the process of academic multicultural education.

In designing their pedagogical practices, academic teachers reflect on their own teaching models, at the level of methodological multicultural reflection. For them, "*issues related to the identification of potential opportunities... and the use of alternative learning strategies are becoming increasingly important*" (Georgieva, D., 2019). It should be emphasized that the academic audience is a model of civil multicultural society and society. The multicultural social relations between the students are transferred as an experience in the university halls. Therefore, one of the first goals of every teacher in different disciplines is to pedagogize, to direct this experience to the formation of multicultural competencies, to cultivate this social life experience in pedagogical-constructive competencies. Therefore, one of the first goals of every teacher in different disciplines is to pedagogize, to direct this experience to the formation of multicultural competencies, to cultivate this social life experience in pedagogical-constructive competencies.

### **3. Didactic technologies for the development of multicultural competencies**

The transformative approach (Alismail, A. H., 2016) is a leading didactic approach in the development of multicultural competencies in university education. Through it, students have the opportunity to explore basic cultural assumptions and to study diversity in relation to the dominant culture; to develop pedagogical skills for managing the interaction between several cultures. Other approaches to work in a multicultural environment are also known - contributory, additional (ex.), but they do not reflect the pluralistic attitude in an environment of academic multicultural relationships. The transformative approach develops concepts such as pluralism, synergy, reflection and research training in the context of academic multiculturalism.

It is a constructive didactic approach that transforms the learning environment into a reflective research environment. The didactic models through which students are effectively trained are modeled in two parallel aspects:

- Academic teaching modeling for work in a multicultural academic environment;
- Development of multicultural competencies in students, synergistically applicable in all disciplines.

The purpose of this didactic modeling is to involve student educators in simulated situations in which to play and experience different roles in a diverse professional, social and multicultural context. In this sense, simulation-based pedagogical training (SBPT) has a major role in modeling didactic technologies for multicultural learning. Simulation-based multicultural learning is constructed from a series of simulations that allow the development of initial pedagogical experience without the consequences of factual and methodological errors. Related to the training of pedagogical specialists, it has its potential for organizing the environment and controlling practical multicultural simulations in the structure of pedagogical education. The leading approach in pedagogical multicultural simulations is the research one.

Simulation-based pedagogical training in a multicultural environment is a planned and purposeful simulation of professional reality, in which students are given

the opportunity to pedagogically experiment and multiply knowledge and skills. This is a practical training in which a pedagogical multicultural environment is imitated or constructed. With its contextuality it develops in the students adequate, flexible and adaptive socio-pedagogical skills. Pedagogical multicultural simulations are ranked as follows: simulations with repeating elements, varying in difficulty simulations, integrative simulations, hierarchically developing simulations. Simulation-based pedagogical training in a multicultural environment is considered as an educational didactic interactive technology, which includes a number of sequential simulation techniques based on training in different disciplines. Organizes an environment in which students actually and procedurally perform pedagogical activities, solve a problem, create an event, design a pedagogical situation in the context of multicultural realities. It also develops skills for predicting future pedagogical effects, impacts and interactions. The outlined methodological globality in the development of multicultural competencies creates conditions in which the student purposefully develops interdisciplinary and intercommunicative skills; to coordinate the many sources of information in the classroom by reducing them into learning-cognitive reflections. In this sense, the simulated pedagogical multicultural environment allows re-involvement of students as often as necessary to orient themselves in the basics of multicultural and optimize the pedagogical results in its perspectives. With the derived essential characteristics, SBPO emerges as a relevant competency model for the development of pedagogical multicultural communication and behavior.

Simulation-based multicultural pedagogical training is trained to develop practical pedagogical skills and the ability to create or repeat exposures (Andrews, D., H., Bel, I H., H., 2000). It is different from situation-based learning. In the English language literature, situational learning is understood as an exercise, a short script, a script, a practical exercise for updating certain target knowledge, skills, practices important for solving a collective task. A situational training usually contains many collective tasks. In the simulation-based learning the student develops and forms the process, the polyrealities and the result; in situational learning it is placed in a specifically created situation and creates the solution, the solution.

In the simulation multicultural education the students exercise pedagogical and social roles for management of the multicultural processes in the whole school life. This includes - teaching cultural diversity in all subjects, working with parents from all cultural groups, working with children and students from all cultural groups.

Here we can accept the opinion of Ivanova, V. on contextual learning, as a substantive characteristic of simulation-based learning. *"Technologically, it is carried out in challenged learning situations by solving problems; learning in and through experience and its various aspects - cultural, social, physical, mental, professional"* (Ivanova, V. 2008). In this sense, the methodological globality of multicultural knowledge is outlined, which has the educational power to create worldviews and attitudes among student educators.

#### **4. Didactic cases for the development of multicultural pedagogical competencies (Empirical research)**

The simulation multicultural learning is realized through didactic cases. These are methodologically reduced variants of an educational case, because they are specified by basic indicators - time, real situation, educational content. Their adaptability and flexibility make it possible to consider them in the various academic disciplines so as to achieve "contextual learning" (ex.).

Here are presented didactic cases considered within the school year 2018 and 2019 school year. One group of students was studied - 20 pieces.

The aim of the study is to trace whether there is a positive trend between the methodological simulation model of multicultural education and its applicability in the pedagogical predictions of students. The purpose of the case studies is to simulate a pedagogical multicultural environment so that the student can plan, construct solutions, develop skills for working with multicultural knowledge.

##### **Didactic case 1:**

*You are a teacher who replaces a colleague in the third grade. For three years now, children from families professing Islam, Christianity and Judaism have been studying together in the class. In the thematic annual distribution is written the topic: Open lesson: "Different but equal". What will be your pedagogical preliminary preparation? What are the main points of your knowledge of religion in the lesson?*

##### **Didactic case 2: Mladen**

*This is Mladen. A tall smiling dark-skinned boy. He is told he is a rum. But he always says he is Bulgarian. He lives in a house on the edge of town, but is far from the Roma ghetto. There are four more brothers and in the morning they all go to school and they all study well. Mladen dreams ....., dreams of becoming Minister of Justice. He has already read the Convention on Human Rights, the Constitution of Bulgaria and other world documents. Mladen loves to read, play sports and sing. Today a group of teachers and students from European schools arrives at the school and he really wants to take part in the reception. He is wearing his latest clothes and wearing a guitar. Unfortunately, the class teacher did not invite him to participate in the reception. Mladen's father met with Mladen's favorite teacher if she could help involve Mladen in the welcoming activities. After a conversation with the class teacher, it was established that Mladen had low grades in the subjects and therefore was not invited to the mobile activities. Comment on the case and suggest pedagogical strategies for its solution.*

##### **Didactic case 3: Tungal**

*Tungal has been in the class recently. He came in the middle of the school year. He is an intelligent and quiet boy of 10 years. He spent his first school years in Sweden because his father was Swedish. His mother is Bulgarian and works in a prestigious position in a Bulgarian-Swedish company. His father has a paper mill. Tungal comes to the Bulgarian school with a wonderful characteristic of an active athlete, creative and creative student, with high credits for educational and cognitive*

tasks. One month later, the class teacher was asked by the parents to make an introductory description of their son's adaptation, his motivation to study, and his behavior in class. The class teacher replied, "Tungel is quiet, he still doesn't communicate much with his classmates. He worries about raising his hand in class, but when asked, he answers correctly. He does great on tests. We have no problem with Tungel. But his parents say there is a problem. As you are already familiar with the aims and objectives of civic education, please comment on the issue. Which areas of multicultural education can be used to build a pedagogical strategy for solving the case?"

Empirical data form the content of the following empirical indicators:

- Indicator 1 - Planning within one lesson;
- Indicator 2 - Planning of project-based training;
- Indicator 3 - Real-time case study planning.

#### **A. Data and results of the group of students in 2018**

- First indicator - 70% of the surveyed (14 students) find a solution to the cases in one lesson as an upgrade of knowledge in the subject Man and Society.
- Second indicator - 30% of students (6 students outline the application of project-based learning by creating different learning tasks and situations in which to involve students. As an important proposal of this group of students is: the topic of the class to is combined with the topic of the next lesson so that students can apply their knowledge in a different environment.
- Indicator 3 - the statistics have a value of zero. None of the researched students' projects contains real-time case studies or other research learning activities.

#### **B. Data and results from the group of students in 2019**

- Indicator 1 - Planning within one lesson is obvious from 7 students - 35%.
- Indicator 2 - Planning of project-based learning is requested by 8 students who can present ideas for project-based learning - 40%.
- Indicator 3 - Real-time case recovery planning - 5 students - 25%. They presented a strategy for the rehabilitation of a didactic case in real time.

The comparative statistical analysis clearly outlines a close correlation between the simulation methodology of multicultural learning and the application of elements of the simulation learning in school education. The correlation coefficient for interdependence between project-based and case-problem design between the group of students in 2018 and the group of students in 2019 is  $Q = 1$ , which shows an extremely high and close relationship between mastering skills for project-based learning and development to problem-oriented learning as levels of simulation-based learning. It is accepted that the application of problem-oriented learning in a school environment is the highest level of simulation learning.

### **5. Conclusions**

The development of multicultural competencies in the modern academic audience has wider pedagogical and social boundaries. Therefore, the teaching of multicultural fact in

university education requires the development of a synergistic methodology. A methodology that covers the globality of multicultural problems and at the same time their specificity, considered through the prism of different classes, classes and disciplines. In this way, students develop broad pedagogical skills and skills to explore and reflect on their own multicultural experience. The data presented from the study of students in two consecutive years outline several main facts:

- multicultural knowledge, taught through the prism of various academic disciplines and through the "alternative strategies" of reflective research training, develops its globality, specificity, but also pedagogical precision;
- multicultural competencies, built and formed through pedagogical simulations, develop the creativity and creative applicability of this knowledge, evident from the comparative graphical analysis of the data.
- the subject-subject interactions in the academic multicultural environment foster tolerant relations and organize pedagogical synergy as a basis in the multicultural competencies of the student pedagogues.

#### **Conflicts of interest statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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