

Social and humanitarian disciplines as a factor in the formation of tolerance among young people in a cross-border region

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to show how the socio-humanitarian disciplines taught in schools and universities of Russia determine the formation of tolerance among the modern Russian youth in the border region. This study is based on the analysis of teaching the course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” and the cycle of socio-humanitarian disciplines in a number of Altai universities. The use of the dialectical approach allowed us to identify a number of complex and contradictory processes occurring in the modern Russian society, following the path of globalization, especially in the cross-border regions. In these regions on the same territory, representatives of many ethnic groups live with their customs, stereotypes, and religion. A systematic method (aimed at reviewing social and humanities disciplines in a single system of ideological knowledge gained at the schools and universities) became the basis for determining the main points that make the teaching of these disciplines a factor in the formation of tolerance. The content of social and humanitarian disciplines, their dialogical nature (requiring specific teaching methods) form a very important basis for the formation of tolerance to the culture of other nations, other customs, and another faith. The article reveals a number of problems that impede the use of the full potential of these disciplines for the formation of tolerance. In particular, the existing system when a student selects only one of a few modules in the course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” is very problematic and controversial, because this approach reduces the loss of knowledge about the content of other modules. The next problem that requires a serious reflection is the problem of adequate methods aimed at incorporating electronic resources into the subjects taught and using the hidden curricula in the work of high school teachers. The article suggests a number of ways to solve these problems.

Keywords: formation of tolerance, social and humanitarian disciplines, module, dialectical approach

1. Introduction

In the contemporary scholarship, the problems of cross-border relations and cross-border regions attract the close attention of politicians, economists, entrepreneurs, scientists. Such interest is not accidental, as the globalizing world blurs the established borders, forms new “points” of economic growth, as well as creates new economic and political realities. In Russia, the relevance of the study of transboundary

problems is due to the presence of similar regions in the European part of our country, as well as in the Far East, Altai, Transbaikalia.

Studies of historians, philosophers, economists in the second half of the 20th century became a prerequisite for understanding the phenomenon of the cross-border area as a region uniting the border areas of two or more states in the context of multilateral interaction. In the period 1960-1970, F. Braudel and other researchers of the “Annals” School studied the influence of the geographic environment on social processes; V. Bibler created the doctrine of the dialogue of cultures; V. M. Mezhuyev’s works analyzed cultural and civilizational features of development, etc. Currently, the phenomenon of cross-border is widely represented in the scientific literature. The works of N. S. Rozov, P. Ya. Baklanov, M. Yu. Shinkovsky, A. N. Neklessa, A. V. Yaroshenko, N. S. Zimina, and others, which are devoted to the study of transboundary problems, are well known. Currently, understanding the phenomenon of a cross-border is widely represented in the scientific literature.

It is worth mentioning that a cross-border region was defined as adjacent border areas of states characterized by a certain natural, economic, socio-cultural, ethnic unity about ten years ago. Today, a cross-border region is a space where legal entities and individuals, social systems belonging to neighboring states legally and systematically interact to implement the exchange of goods, services, material, informational, cultural, intellectual, labor, and other resources [1]. Effective interaction in the cross-border regions implies a tolerant coexistence of national cultures, as well as the formation of a multicultural space, the development of cross-border economic systems, including even international joint production, international educational structures, etc.

In addition, the problem of the formation of tolerance is always relevant in multinational states. The representatives of more than 180 nationalities live in Russia. Although the Altai region belongs to the prosperous regions in terms of interethnic interaction, but individual symptoms in interethnic relations indicate a potential population conflict. Thus, according to a sociological survey conducted among the residents of the Altai region, the existence of hostility among the population of the region to the representatives of individual nationalities is alarming. In particular, the authors of this study (A. A. Gorbunova, S. G. Maksimova) state that there is a strong need to implement measures aimed at forming ideas of tolerance in society [2].

Cross-border regions breed complex, controversial socio-cultural processes. According to N. S. Zimina, the countries belonging to different types of civilization are included in cross-border interactions. This creates certain difficulties in their interaction and reveals potential threats to development [3]. In addition, the formation of a cross-border sociocultural space (a “sociocultural cross-border”) occurs at the junction of several cultures, which results in a change in the traditional foundations of human activity, the system of cultural values, identity, and the system of social relationships. It is worth mentioning that the phenomenon of a “hybrid” person is reflected in the scholarship, including the works of E. Stonkvist, R. Park, S. Rushdie, etc.

The process of accumulating the values of another person belonging to a different culture or the whole cultures can take place under various “scenarios,” from complete “dissolution” in them to aggressive rejection. Therefore, it seems that certain familiarity with other cultures should be anticipatory in nature, and educational programs can contribute to this goal. We believe that the socio-humanitarian disciplines are designed to solve this problem. Knowledge allows a person to adapt to other cultural realities, remove rejection, aggression, form tolerance, and the introduction of educational programs significantly contributes to these processes. In educational programs, the diversity of cultures of the modern world is represented. Both school and university courses in social and humanities are examples of this pattern.

Taking into account the aforementioned, a new subject, “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics,” recently introduced into school programs deserves special attention. Based on the analysis of the teaching experience of this course, we can trace the pros and cons of the genera; school humanitarian training. The study of teaching social sciences in schools and at universities reveals that their influence on the formation of tolerance among young people is conditioned both by the specific content of these disciplines and by special teaching methods (dialogue, business games, etc.) [6, 7].

These teaching methods contribute to the formation in the young students of a respectful attitude towards “other” persons, coming from a culturally different background [8]. However, a number of problems exist that do not allow the full use of the potential of social humanitarian disciplines for the formation of tolerance. These include an independent choice by parents (for children to study) of one in a number of modules comprising the course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular ethics”, as well as difficulties arising from the use of information resources in the teaching of social and humanities disciplines in higher education institutions.

The purpose of the article is to show how the study of social and humanitarian disciplines affects the formation of tolerance among the young people in a cross-border region.

2. Methods

The use of the dialectical approach allowed us to identify a number of complex and contradictory processes occurring in the modern Russian society, following the path of globalization. These processes are particularly apparent and challenging in the cross-border regions. A systematic method, aimed at examining social and humanities disciplines in a single system of ideological knowledge obtained at schools and universities, became the basis for determining the educational potential of these disciplines. Consequently, this allows us to consider them as a factor in the formation of tolerance. Our research also relies on the documents of Ministries and Departments of the Russian Federation (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Enlightenment, etc.), all of which are related to teaching in schools and universities of Russia. Our analysis of the monitoring results focused on introducing the course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Rthics,” as well as presentations at conferences of the specialists teaching humanitarian disciplines in schools and universities, allowed to form a complete picture of this process, revealed the main advantages and disadvantages (and sometimes difficulties) of the performed work.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. *Some results of teaching in schools of Russia the course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics”*

On December 17, 2010 Russian Ministry of Education has approved the subject “Fundamentals of Spiritual and Moral Cultures of the Russian people” as part of the federal state educational standard of general education [9]. Later, the course was renamed in the following manner: “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” (ORKSE). The goal of the ORKSE training course is to form motivations for conscious moral behavior based on knowledge and respect for the cultural and religious traditions of the multinational people of Russia, as well as for dialogue with representatives of other cultures and worldviews. Of course, this is focused on the young teenagers of Russia.

The objectives of the training course ORKSE include:

- Introducing the students to the basics of Orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish cultures, as well as the basics of world religious cultures and secular ethics;
- Developing ideas about the value of moral norms and values for a decent life of the individual, family, society;
- Generalization of knowledge, concepts and ideas about spiritual culture and morals obtained by students in elementary school, and the formation of their value-semantic ideological foundations, ensuring a holistic perception of national history and culture in the study of humanitarian subjects at the primary school level;
- Developing the ability of younger students to communicate in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment on mutual respect and dialogue in the name of public peace and harmony [9].

The course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” consists of several modules that include the basics of Orthodox, Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish culture, the history of world religions and

the basics of secular ethics. Parents and students have the right to choose the module they need to study [10].

Currently, there is some information about the teaching of this course in the Russian Federation in 2017-2018. So, the majority of students (40.57%) are studying the module “Fundamentals of Secular Ethics”, 38.5% – “The Basics of Orthodox Culture”, 16.49% – “The Basics of World Religious Cultures”, 3.94% – “The Basics of Islamic Culture”. Less than 1% choose the remaining modules [4].

These figures indicate that as a result of the selectivity of the modules and the preferential choice in most schools of the “Fundamentals of secular ethics” module, the first and main goal of introducing this course (to familiarize students with the basics of Orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish cultures, i.e. the basics of world religious cultures) is achieved. In our perspective, when parents choose a module that focuses solely on the religion shared by this particular any religious culture to be studied, other world religious cultures remain outside the scope of their children. Such a division of the course cannot contribute to the formation of tolerance.

Among other difficulties of teaching this course, we would like to highlight the training of teachers, from which deep knowledge of the foundations of world religions is required. In most schools of Russia, primary school teachers with advanced knowledge (full-time, part-time, distance) teach this course. High-quality teaching of this course requires special training.

It seems that the introduction of such courses into the educational process should be carried out on a mandatory basis for all students, especially when it comes to those schoolchildren living in cross-border regions.

3.2. Necessity and possibility of forming tolerance among students

Many high school students continue to study social sciences and humanities in colleges and universities. However, at present, the emphasis here is on vocational training, which is increasingly narrowing down to teaching strictly applied subjects. This only prevents from training the specialists capable of easily retraining on the basis of a good level of theoretical training, slowly eroding the social potential for greater tolerance.

We would like to note and disclose several important points that make humanitarian disciplines especially significant for the formation of tolerance. The first point is connected with the “knowledge component.” It is those humanitarian disciplines that expand and deepen students’ knowledge about the social world, about various cultures of nations. The study of philosophy, religion, cultures contributes to the formation of ideas about the diversity of cultures and the conviction of the need to know the specifics of the customs and traditions of “other” people with whom they “have to” communicate. The second point is connected with the forms and methods of teaching. “Dialogue” is the most appropriate, necessary, and often used form in the learning process. Determining one’s position on a particular issue, understanding certain ideas of the “other”, understanding the possibility and acceptability of a different point of view in the most complex existential and cultural-moral issues are what the “humanitarian dialogues” give for tolerant attitudes towards each other. These dialogues can take place in the form of juxtaposition of different points of view on the same issue expressed by the students who engage other members of the group into this discussion, which could be conducted in the form of “small groups”, business games, case-solving, etc.

We can identify a third point which is associated with the use of electronic educational and methodological complexes in social and humanities disciplines at universities. This method of working with students has its own specific features. One should bear in mind that many social and humanitarian disciplines are studied mainly in the first year, i.e. when only new student groups begin to form. In each group, there are students who find it easier to express their point of view in writing to the “teacher separately” than to disclose their position in front of the group. But this is one side of using electronic resources. The second side is the preparation of assignments for students aimed at identifying their attitude to representatives of other nationalities, cultures, faiths and adjusting positions (through job analysis and interviews) in order to form tolerance. In teaching social sciences and humanities, the presence of “hidden curricula” is significant, having an impact on students’ identities and attitudes. “The

hidden curriculum is transmitted through the selection of educational material, especially the communication of teachers and students, the system of encouragement and assessment, as well as through the organization of the physical space at the educational institution” [5, pp. 83-84].

4. Conclusion

Emphasizing the importance of social and humanitarian disciplines for the formation of tolerance, we would like to note that the task of forming tolerance should be introduced into the composition of compulsory general cultural educational competences, which are formed in all educational institutions of Russia.

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