

# Inter-Ethnic Communication of Foreign Students in the Educational Space of the Russian Federation

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**Abstract** — The article discusses the results of social and humanitarian studies on globalization that influences all spheres of life of foreign students in the multi-cultural environment. Global integration of states, ethnic groups, cultures and civilizations changed personal and group identification and self-identification. One of the solutions to intercultural and interethnic problems which determined the qualitative level of relationships in the multi-ethnic society is polytechnic education as a center for multi-ethnic and multicultural unification of representatives of different cultures. It is necessary to increase the role of polytechnic education as an alternative for foreign students outside their ethnic communities. The study of this problem makes it possible to consider personal psychological and social problems in terms of ethnic awareness and ethnic identity of foreign students. They may affect awareness of their importance in new socio-cultural conditions of the professional environment.

**Keywords** — *inter-ethnic communication, ethnic identity, ethnic identification, educational space, multi-ethnic environment, socio-psychological aspect, social self-identification, multi-ethnic associations*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the Russian Federation which is a multinational country, these problems were related to tolerance, inter-ethnic mutual respect, interpenetration of cultures, preservation of the uniqueness of national minorities, etc. Representatives of other national cultures can learn the Russian culture without prejudice to their ethnic space. Education of foreign students in the Russian Federation causes such problems as socialization and assimilation of foreign cultural experience, while maintaining own ethnic identity. While preserving ethnic identity, such concepts as “ethnic environment”, “ethnosphere of modern society”, “trans-ethnic functional systems” are used [1]. The use of these concepts is due to global changes occurring in the modern educational space,

where it is important to preserve “ethnic identity”. It is the last frontier that assesses perception of an alien environment as a danger to its ethnocultural symbols and artifacts.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material used for the research is the works on national and foreign philosophy, sociology and psychology, history, political science, anthropology by Hempel, Reil, Searle, Khotinets, Lurie, Bromley, Buchek, Snezhkova, Jordanian which reveal socio-cultural nature of ethnic identity. To preserve axiological significance, ethnic identity creates prerequisites for diversification against new global challenges.

The research methods used for studying a multicultural and polyethnic society is dialectic and axiological approaches. When studying ethnic identity, systemic analysis and structural analysis, elements of behavioral, primordial, constructivist and instrumental approaches were used. They helped identify the influence of ethnic identity on modern social processes. To determine the structure of ethnic identity, cognitive, systemic, cultural, historical, and behavioral approaches were applied. The social level of ethnic identity was analyzed in terms of ethno-cultural identity and its various types – mono-ethnic, multiple, marginal, assimilating, and biethnic ones. Theoretical modelling was used to identify structural, substantive-criterial, and procedural-forming functions of ethnic self-consciousness.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Issues of ethnic identity are discussed by Soviet (Arutyunova, Bromley, Dzharylgasimova, Kozlov), and Russian scientists (Aleksandrenkova, Wiener, Dashdamirov, Kon, Levkovich, Pankova, Pimenov, Porshneva, Mavrodina, Semenova, ybakova, Filippova, and Khotinets) researchers. The studies of ethnic identity were fragmented rather than systemic. When studying ethnic self-consciousness, its ability to translate

cultural heritage was considered, while the role of an active participant in public life was given to national self-consciousness. The individual had to choose his ethnic or social identity since various ideologies did not allow for objective assessment of his ethnic self-consciousness. It should be emphasized that ethnic self-consciousness was a structural element of ethnic groups rather than a stimulus to ethnic unification.

Ethnic identity is a socio-cultural element that allows ethnic communities and individuals to realize their uniqueness, self-worth and individuality. In modern science, more and more attention is paid to the globalization with its large-scale impact on activities of multinational states. On the one hand, globalization offers opportunities for joint solutions which expands interaction of peoples and strengthens mutual understanding between different countries. On the other hand, universalization is a threat to national states, because it restricts and weakens the ethnic area. Russian researchers have similar views on relations between global consciousness and ethnic self-consciousness (Selivanov, Smirnov, Superfin et al.). They emphasize that ethnic identity is subject to negative effects of globalization. Since ethnic identity is part of spiritual culture of the ethnos, it is the most important tool for ethno-identification. These works identified causes of contradictions between global consciousness and ethnic self-consciousness, but the scenario of their correlation and development was not described. The Russian researchers deal with interethnic contacts, interactions and conflicts.

It is necessary to emphasize that they pay attention to the role of ethnic self-consciousness as one of the main community markers. The researchers were not able to assess its importance for ethnic groups and individuals. Ethnic self-consciousness became a catalyst for tension in the events that affected interests of ethnic groups.

#### IV. RESULTS

To describe these processes, the term “hybridity” [2] is the most suitable, as it reveals a wide range of social and cultural phenomena of the host country affecting development of skills in representatives of other ethno-cultural groups. The polyethnic environment of the Russian Federation is favorable for satisfying professional interests of representatives of various ethnic groups studying in the country. Due to the hybridity, professional qualities are developed through differences, and not against them, forming new group communities based on professional interests. This path rejects ethnic separatism and involves cultural identification of foreign students not jeopardizing their national heritage.

In addition, in the process of modernization of polytechnic education in the Russian Federation, foreign students have additional motives and opportunities to choose their professional identities. They can study majors without regard to their national or ethnic identities. Attractiveness of polytechnic education is one of the results of economic and

cultural policies of the Russian Federation aimed at solving interethnic problems.

At the same time, “national interests” do not lose their significance. On the contrary, they acquire a more practical tint due to the national and economic competition under globalization. On the one hand, ethnical and cultural identity is preserved. On the other hand, globalization marks boundaries of national identity, since identity give nations a chance to find their unique place [3]. This contributes to further professional development and fair competition of various national interests.

Centers of gravity of polytechnic educational processes are megacities where it is easier to consolidate achievements of the global scientific community for theoretical and practical implementation. The environment of megacities became a source for cultural genesis and multiculturalism [4].

Under globalization, the Russian region is open to foreign students, because it provides opportunities for communication, social mobility, new interpersonal contacts, acquisition of professional skills and interethnic sociocultural interaction. By learning specificity of the new social space, the Russian language, traditional cultures, students change their mentality.

Polytechnic education in Russia aims to develop multi-ethnic communication of students. There is a great demand for communication that unites ethnic cultures, since this contributes to multilingual and intercultural competence, professionalism and sociocultural intelligence. This position involves several lines of development of sociocultural intelligence: a) perception of a different culture through a set of ethnic, social, and personal intercommunication links; b) the individual is not ready to identify himself with a “foreign” culture; c) the individual is forced to accept distinctive sociocultural values [5].

Lines a and c are more interesting as they are more constructive for cooperation of the Russian Federation and the countries of origin of the students.

The polyethnic environment of the Russian Federation has a beneficial effect on self-identification of foreign students who identify themselves with a number of technical professions demanded in the modern economy and business, by transnational corporations working in the Russian regions. Intensive intercultural and inter-ethnic contacts, youth lifestyle, an increasing role of foreign languages as a means of inter-ethnic communication are important factors of professional competence for Russian and foreign students.

Multiculturalism, i.e. mixing of various cultures is typical of everyday life and professional activities. It is difficult to talk about the unity of diverse cultures. We can talk about a hybrid culture or a transnational culture. [6].

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite strong national traditions, Asian countries are involved in this process. Due to global changes, new sociocultural values that cannot be ignored were formed. They can give a new global form to the national interests.

It might be due to the desire of politicians – technocrats – protecting their own economic interests, taking into account the very image of a global culture that is not tied to a particular place or a certain society. The global market establishes its own laws. It uses global telecommunication systems. Traditional culture is being replaced by a “constructed” culture which is transnational [7].

Polytechnic education in the Russian Federation is subject to globalization, since it is included in this process in a very fragmented manner, in terms of regional representation development. In this case, the ethnic identity of foreign students acts under the guise of differentiating features, as a set of mechanisms for structuring professional activities as a resource for preserving ethnic and cultural identities [8].

When analyzing this process, we identified a number of features of ethnic self-awareness in mastering professional skills by representatives of various ethnic groups (students) studying at the technical university. The technical university creates a social environment on the basis of individual and professional qualities of students. Ethnic components which are not characteristic of polytechnic educational institutions are leveled.

Polytechnic universities, being a cross-cultural formation, include the immediate environment of the individual, conditions of tolerant interaction of a large number of ethnic groups gathered in a certain social space and at a certain time, in specific historical and geographical conditions. It is important to remember that tolerant interaction is preservation of own ethnic identity and socialization in a multiethnic environment. Ethnic polyphony of the modern living is a phenomenon studied by various scientific fields and discussed in the humanities as a polyethnic region with the least pronounced intergroup intensity.

In Russia, regardless of ethnic associations, people do not feel hostility to foreigners and fear for their security in the multicultural environment. Meanwhile, multiculturalism forms new concepts and values that instill a sense of security and confidence in the future [9].

Over the long historical period, Russia has become a polyethnic society and a “standard” of social identity. This is due to the idea that “people do not belong to the same ethnic group, they are members of two or more communities, representative of several cultures” [10]. If “ethnic identity” is mainly associated with origins of the ethnos, ethnic communication is part of “social identity” with various meanings due to accelerating global changes in the society. Owing to the works by Tajfel [11], social aspects of identity formed a social identity.

Therefore, Russia is a socially diverse society. Successful socialization involves development of abilities to choose and change identities, behavioral variability in different cultural and social environments, tolerance towards “others”.

Educational institutions creating and implementing socializing functions have to find a “balance” between development of the social identity and preservation of the

ethnic one. The multiethnic environment expands possibilities of interaction with representatives of other ethnic communities. However, it generates a greater interest in own ethnicity [12]. Thus, if the polyethnic environment is socialized, ethnic awareness is developed earlier than ethnic identity.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The studies show that foreign students studying at polytechnic universities of Russia turn the reaction to external events into the inner life. It depends on ethnocultural specificity of the environment and ethnic processes in the educational space.

Inter-ethnic communication in polytechnic universities provides foreign students with more opportunities to acquire knowledge of “their” and other ethnic groups and contributes to inter-ethnic understanding and development of communication skills in professional activities.

Currently, polyethnicity is a basis for polyvariance in vocational education which is a relevant “reference point” for social identification of foreign students and changes in consciousness and self-consciousness of the individual. Communication of representatives of different ethnic communities in the globalizing society give rise to new meanings of the reality. Construction of social ideas is based on the desire of the individual to exercise control over new processes and need to make the world more predictable and understandable.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The study identified features of the polyethnic environment as an educational space influencing the ethnic identity of students of technical universities. The types of ethnic identity correlating with a set of personal indicators make it possible to develop an integrated approach to social construction and a new type of educational “service” – development of an ability to form social and professional identities. Inter-ethnic communication and self-fulfillment of foreign students are a priority in regulating the process of development of professional skills in changing multiethnic conditions.

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