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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY

Olha Svyrydiuk

Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Uman, Ukraine

ORCID: 0000-0003-3954-397X, e-mail: zov2380@gmail.com

The article examines multicultural education in the light of international academic mobility by the example of Adam Mickiewicz University. The definitions of multicultural education and academic mobility are given in the article. Erasmus Mundus Project (Eminence I, Eminence II) goals are described.

It is stated that Adam Mickiewicz University is one of the largest academic centers in Poland, which is playing a significant role in social, economic, and cultural transformations going on in Central-East Europe.

It is outlined that implementation of multicultural education in AMU in the light of academic mobility is directly conducted through studying of specialized multicultural courses and indirectly through learning in multicultural groups, participation at summer schools, conferences, workshops etc. It is provided through courses such as «Multiculturalism and Tolerance», «Multicultural Societies and Multiculturalism as a Policy of the Post-Colonial Countries», «Introduction to Foreign Language Teaching and Learning», «Polish Language», and «Management of Tourism and Business. Introduction to Tourism Industry». The author stressed the role of multicultural group activity. It promotes intense and productive work, allows you to make decisions together in a group and identify the most significant moments in the work. Students learn how to work in a multicultural group, be able to solve tasks and achieve good results. The obtained experience promotes skills of intercultural communication with other cultures, understanding of the similarities between cultures and respect them.

The author pays attention to extra-curricular work such as visiting museums, theatres, cinemas and sightseeing. Participating in summer school, conferences and workshop gives a nice possibility to meet new people from diverse cultural background and build intercultural communication skills.

The author summarizes that academic mobility contributes to the multicultural education development, giving real experience of being in a multicultural environment, develops intercultural skills, tolerant attitude to other people, acquaints with other cultures, and opens differences and similarities between cultures.

Key words: multicultural education, intercultural communication, academic mobility, higher education, Bologna process.



Introduction

The changes taking place in the social and economic, political and cultural sphere of Ukraine actualize the problem of comprehensive harmonious development of young people. The issues related to involving students in the cultural experience of humanity, development and application of aesthetic and cultural values of the world, active artistic and creative activities take a significant place. Therefore, the process of multicultural education of the university students becomes particularly important. The Article 75 of the Law of Ukraine «On Higher Education» outlines the main areas of international cooperation in higher education and the facilitation of mobility for academic researchers, teaching staff and students is among these areas (the Law of Ukraine «On Higher Education»: 2014). Updating processes of academic mobility is a fair response to the challenges of the global economy, which is deployed on a planetary scale and internationalization of education. It becomes very important in the light of multicultural educational environment creation. Analysis of the available publications and familiarity with the real situation in high school (at least in the case of Ukraine) allow us to suggest that the question of the organization of higher education academic mobility is still solved on the level of bilateral cooperation agreements and sporadic inclusion in international educational programs.

The aim of the article is to reveal the content of multicultural education in the light of international academic mobility.

Therefore, as Canadian scientist Rathna Ghosh maintains, multicultural education policies should focus on preparing students to participate in a just and fair society. Moreover, the educational system must better engage students in human rights, and provide equal opportunities to all cultural groups in all aspects of life (Ghosh 2004: 543-566).

Multicultural education according to Saskatchewan Association for Multicultural Education is an interdisciplinary educational process, which fosters understanding acceptance, empathy, and constructive and harmonious relations among people of diverse cultures. It encourages learners of all ages to view different cultures as a source of learning and enrichment.

If we assess the state of multicultural education in Ukraine, we should recognize that it is not part of the priority directions of science teaching and practice. Scientists and teachers often ignore «uncomfortable questions», as ethnic conflicts and nationalism. Meanwhile multiculturalism is not laid at the genetic level; it is socially determined and must be brought up.

Ukrainian scientists V. Bolharina and I. Loshchenova presented their views on multicultural education and mentioned that «...culture is a key concept of multicultural education as a universal phenomenon; a tool to help the individual overcome the path from ethnic and national culture assimilation to realizing the common interests of the peoples in their aspiration for peace, harmony, progress through cultural development» (Bolharina, Loshchenova 2002: 3-6).

Ukrainian researchers point out that multicultural education should not deny national one, and should be considered together as components of a single process. They believe this combination will promote deeper learning and understanding both national and universal moral values.



The European experience of multicultural education is important. First of all, it is valuable from the standpoint of implementation of the Bologna principles, where the development of academic mobility is characterized as the first priority and the basic principle of a common European education area (O. Oleinikova, 2011: 43). The following qualities and skills have been developed in students through academic mobility: to choose the ways of interaction with the environment; readiness to intercultural communication; the ability to evaluate themselves and their country from a cross-cultural position; «inner understanding» of other cultures at foreign universities etc. (T. Tregubova, 2015:194-197).

Academic mobility differs from traditional internships. First of all, the applicants go to study abroad for a semester or a year. In addition, during this period they learn not only the language and some subjects, but also they complete semester or year course, which will be credited after returning to home university [6, p. 25]. Consequently, the inclusion of the individual in academic mobility provides powerful interaction with another culture in general and its academic environment in particular. On the one hand, academic mobility allows getting some academic experience and developing their competence as a specialist in a particular field. On the other hand, it gives the opportunity to contribute to the achievements of both academic systems (academic traditions) and the cultural horizon of other countries.

Multicultural education in PTUSPU is provided also through the implementation of international academic mobility programs for students, undergraduates, PhD students and doctoral students. Erasmus Mundus Project (Eminence I, Eminence II) is one of them. The goals are: to increase the skills level of the most motivated and talented students, undergraduates and graduate students and enable them to gain international experience, and, in a result, to increase the chances of employment; to support the students' mobility from Eastern Partnership countries with vulnerable groups in order to obtain their qualifications and experience in the partner countries with the EU; to promote human resources and the international cooperation of higher education institutions of the Eastern Partnership by means of individual mobility, which should bring benefits both to an individual, and to the development of the University and society as a whole. It increases understanding of European higher education in the Eastern Partnership countries and facilitates to their integration into the European educational space and the Bologna Process. It also creates and strengthens long-term relationships and cooperation between universities of EU and Eastern Partnership, which will be prolonged after the end of the program. Mutual assistance of the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries is based on sharing of culture, knowledge and ideas [5].

Due to international partnership between Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University and Adam Mickiewicz University, the author was managed to become a member of Erasmus Mundus community. The author completed the studying at the Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities and at Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, researching the multicultural education at Polish university.



Adam Mickiewicz University is one of the largest academic centers in Poland. Its reputation has been founded on tradition, achievements of the academic staff, and an attractive curriculum offered to students. No doubt, the AMU is now one of the Polish institutions, which is playing a significant role in social and economic and cultural transformations going on in Central-East Europe.

The university is also the center of academic excellence where research and teaching are mutually sustaining. It continuously extends and updates research programs and study curricula stressing on interdisciplinary and international nature. In particular, it is also known for its multicultural environment that is very important for studying multicultural education. Participating in the Eminence II project of the Erasmus Mundus program allowed obtaining the real experience of being in a multicultural environment and developing skills of intercultural communication.

Implementation of multicultural education in AMU in the light of academic mobility is directly conducted through studying of specialized multicultural courses and indirectly through learning in multicultural groups, participation at summer schools, conferences, workshops etc. For instance, the Faculty of Anthropology in Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan offers such specialized courses as «Multiculturalism and Tolerance» and «Multicultural Societies and Multiculturalism as a Policy of the Post-Colonial Countries». They provide knowledge on culture and theory of multiculturalism; multicultural society and multicultural policies; different disciplinary approaches to relations with the subject; contemporary theoretical discussions in the field of multiculturalism in the context of recent history and politics; familiarization with practical and theoretical issues and terminology, the concept of cultural pluralism and multicultural policies.

Students have a great interest to the mentioned issues. One of the reasons is that most people face these problems in their daily lives in today's globalized world. Besides, they have their own experience of living with the representatives of several cultures in the same area. This experience requires theoretical justification, amplification and offers solutions to these problems.

It should be noted that other courses which are offered by the university are also actively engaged in multicultural education through intercultural communication in multicultural groups. For example, such course as «Introduction to Foreign Language Teaching and Learning» provides knowledge of the interdisciplinary nature of the review of second language; research on teaching foreign language, psycholinguistic framework and its links with psychology, pedagogy and science of culture; the role of intercultural competence in communication, teaching and learning foreign languages.

Studying in multicultural groups promotes understanding of other cultures, strengthening of the friendly relations, raising respect to each other. Through engaging in different activities and various projects, students realize that despite the differences in culture, they can successfully work together and achieve higher results.

Institute of Polish Studies of the same university offers courses in Polish language for foreigners according to their levels. Their participation contributes to fast adaptation to a foreign language environment, increases the level of Polish language, familiarizes with Polish culture, customs and traditions. The purpose of



the course is to bring people from all over the world to be interested in other cultures and encourages the exchange of information on their culture, experience, opinions and ideas, establish contacts and friendly relations.

Another course «Management of Tourism and Business. Introduction to Tourism Industry» is interesting and cognitive. It prepares to work with tourist groups and tourism, teaches and explains how to use knowledge on hiking in practice, introduces the possibility of working in the tourism industry, develops intercultural communication skills etc. Training is organized to prepare students to work with multicultural groups of tourists. First of all, students get acquainted with theoretical material, then they plan the tour to another country. During the studying students develop the itinerary, collect and present information on sightseeing places. After careful preparation, students start a journey where everyone can feel himself a guide and provide interesting and educational information about certain part of way.

Group activity promotes intense and productive work, allows you to make decisions together in a group and identify the most significant moments in the work. Students learn how to work in a multicultural group, be able to solve tasks and achieve good results. The obtained experience promotes skills of intercultural communication with other cultures, understanding of the similarities between cultures and respect them.

For more in-depth review and study of Polish Culture, the University offers the following additional activities to participate: School of Polish Language and Culture for International Students; Summer School of Polish Language and Culture; Language school offering preliminary courses of English; AMU-PIE: one year of studying at the university, including about 300 courses taught in English, French and Spanish.

The aim of the summer school «Communication, Culture and Technology. The Development of Practical Skills of Modern Academy» was to acquaint students with the fundamentals of intercultural communication, establishing intercultural relations. It should be emphasized that tutors' professionalism helped all members of multicultural groups to adapt to the environmental conditions, present themselves and their country, to work in groups and achieve high results.

Besides the intensive work in class, students had the opportunity to get acquainted with the history and culture of Polish people making the trip to the salt and gold mines. Climbing at Black mountain took place at the end of the summer school. It continued to the formation of friendly relations among students from different countries, finding similarities and differences between cultures, grouping of the members of multicultural groups into a like-minded team.

It is worth to say that the issue of dialogue of cultures, multiculturalism, transculturalism, interculturalism are relevant to the international scientific community, too. For example, the author participated in two international conferences such as «Rozdroża. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia Inter-, Wielo-, Transkulturowo» (Czenstochowa, 2015) and «World in the Dialogue: Intercultural Problems in the Religious, Economic, Communication and Educational Context» (Poznan, 2016). The following issues had been discussed: religion in the context of the dialogue and clash of civilizations; multicultural education in the perspective of international



cooperation; intercultural dialogue in historical and contemporary approach; the impact of the mission and missionaries on inter civilizational relationships; media vs intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue; legal and political context of religious communication.

Conclusions

To summarize the mentioned above it can be stated that academic mobility contributes to the multicultural education development, giving real experience of being in a multicultural environment, develops intercultural skills, tolerant attitude to other people, acquaints with other cultures, and opens differences and similarities between cultures. Further research conducting might be connected with the study of international students training at the university.

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