

Formation of multicultural competence of preschool children

Formação de competência multicultural de crianças pré-escolares

Formación de la competencia multicultural de los niños en edad preescolar

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ABSTRACT

The peculiarities of the development of the modern globalized world indicate the need to address the field of culture as an important principle of raising children from preschool age. The purpose of the article is to analyze the formation of the foundations of multicultural competence of preschool children in Ukraine. The objectives of the study are: to investigate the features of the theoretical perception of multiculturalism in the modern Ukrainian pedagogical system, to interpret empirical material on the attitude to multiculturalism among the surveyed parents and preschool children. The research is based on the use of theoretical research methods, including analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction, concretization, comparison, abstraction. Also, the study was formed as a result of using a statistical method, which consisted of qualitative analysis of experimental data. The results show that the multicultural development environment is an integrated category, which includes various areas of activity of the preschooler, so it is important to provide special conditions, a stable psychological atmosphere. The work on the basis of empirical material summarizes the favorable attitude of preschool children to foreigners and the desire of parents to deepen this program. According to our author's definition, multicultural education should be understood as the process of assimilation by preschoolers of values and experiences of other ethnic groups in the region where they live, with special emphasis on the study of their cultural achievements and national characteristics.

Keywords: Analysis. Education system. Tolerance.

RESUMO

As peculiaridades do desenvolvimento do mundo moderno globalizado indicam a necessidade de abordar o campo da cultura como um importante princípio da educação dos filhos desde a idade pré-escolar. O objetivo do artigo é analisar a formação dos fundamentos da competência multicultural de crianças pré-escolares na Ucrânia. Os objetivos do estudo são: investigar as características da percepção teórica do multiculturalismo no sistema pedagógico ucraniano moderno, interpretar material empírico sobre a atitude em relação ao multiculturalismo entre os pais e crianças pré-escolares pesquisados. A pesquisa baseia-se na utilização de métodos teóricos de pesquisa, incluindo análise, síntese, indução e dedução, concretização, comparação, abstração. Além disso, o estudo foi formado a partir da utilização de um método estatístico, que consistiu na análise qualitativa de dados experimentais. Os resultados mostram que o ambiente de desenvolvimento multicultural é uma categoria integrada, que inclui diversas áreas de atuação do pré-escolar, por isso é importante proporcionar condições especiais, um ambiente psicológico estável. O trabalho com base em material empírico sintetiza a atitude favorável dos pré-escolares aos estrangeiros e o desejo dos pais de aprofundar este programa. Segundo a definição do nosso autor, a educação multicultural deve ser entendida como o processo de assimilação pelos pré-escolares de valores e experiências de outras etnias da região onde vivem, com especial ênfase no estudo de suas realizações culturais e características nacionais.

Palavras-chave: Análise. Sistema de educação. Tolerância.

RESUMEN

Las peculiaridades del desarrollo del mundo moderno globalizado indican la necesidad de abordar el ámbito de la cultura como un principio importante de la educación de los niños desde la edad preescolar. El propósito del artículo es analizar la formación de los fundamentos de la competencia multicultural de los niños en edad preescolar en Ucrania. Los objetivos del estudio son: investigar las características de la percepción teórica del multiculturalismo en el moderno sistema pedagógico ucraniano, interpretar el material empírico sobre la actitud hacia el multiculturalismo entre los padres y los niños preescolares encuestados. La investigación se basa en el uso de métodos de investigación teóricos, como el análisis, la síntesis, la inducción y la deducción, la concreción, la comparación y la abstracción. Además, el estudio se formó como resultado del uso de un método estadístico, que consistió en el análisis cualitativo de los datos experimentales. Los resultados muestran que el entorno de desarrollo multicultural es una categoría integrada, que incluye diversas áreas de actividad del niño en edad preescolar, por lo que es importante proporcionar condiciones especiales, una atmósfera psicológica estable. El trabajo sobre la base de material empírico resume la actitud favorable de los niños en edad preescolar a los extranjeros y el deseo de los padre's para profundizar en este programa. Según la definición de nuestro autor, la educación multicultural debe entenderse como el proceso de asimilación por parte de los niños en edad preescolar de los valores y experiencias de otros grupos étnicos de la región en la que viven, con especial énfasis en el estudio de sus logros culturales y características nacionales.

Palabras clave: Análisis. Sistema educativo. Tolerancia.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and migration changes, the problems of intercultural coexistence of different peoples within one country are important. Long-term and harmonious development of any society is possible only due to the symbiosis of different communities, regardless of the presence of differences in terms of culture. Modern democratic Ukraine is actually only joining these processes, and on its way meets with great difficulty. The cultural diversity of the

Ukrainian society and the long-term practice of cohabitation and interaction of different nationalities are characteristic of Ukrainian history. This is a significant platform for improving the effective interaction of the multicultural environment. However, there are difficulties in the integration of exponents of different cultures into a single Ukrainian civic space, the inert introduction of pedagogical experience in education.

In modern conditions in Ukraine the problems of formation of national consciousness, consideration of the official status of the Ukrainian language, ethnic mutual contacts between nationalities, which prevail or are numerically inferior in different regions of the state, become crucial at the state level, determining the decentralization of administration and administrative apparatus, the general public democratization. Against this background, the search for a new balance of power between family education, pre-school education, parental control is relevant. Of course, new research is not unproblematic, but necessary in terms of current trends in social development.

For this reason, the purpose of our article is to analyze the formation of the basics of multicultural competence of preschool children in Ukraine. The research tasks are the peculiarities of the theoretical perception of multiculturalism in the modern Ukrainian pedagogical system, the interpretation of empirical material regarding multiculturalism among the interviewed parents of preschool children.

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical section of the work is formed on the systematic study of modern pedagogical literature and the generalization of some of the experience of researchers. In particular, Kosheleva (2019) defined the essence and main features of multicultural education of preschool children in modern conditions. The researcher also identified the main tasks that arise in the process of multicultural education and substantiated the problem of fostering spirituality in preschool children. Cherg and Davis (2017) identified the issues of becoming preschool education specialists through the prism of multicultural education of children. At the same time, experts also analyzed the features of the learning process on multiculturalism of students. Suri and Chandra (2021) noted that in preschool education the introduction of multicultural education built on local cultural values is important for children to be aware of the ethnic diversity around them. In addition, experts outlined certain teaching strategies that teachers use to implement multicultural education. The implementation of multicultural learning through the lens of inclusive preschool education is reflected in the works (Nasution & Rudiyanto, 2021). Features of the formation of multicultural values in preschool children traced (Solehuddin & Budiman, 2019). Aspects of the benefits of multicultural education have been highlighted by (Walter, 2017). Slamet et al, (2021) and others have characterized the relevance of multicultural education. They believe that multicultural education is a progressive approach to the transformation of education, which eliminates discriminatory problems in the educational process (At the same time, the gradual development of such education is important, because then multicultural programs will always be aimed at mutual understanding between representatives of different ethnic groups.) (Acar- Ciftci, 2016) has developed a scale of special competencies of multicultural education, with which she characterized the current state of this issue.

The study is based on the use of theoretical methods of research, among which analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction. With the help of concretization, the formation of multicultural competence in preschool children in Ukraine is reflected. Equally important was the method of comparison, through which we were able to compare the practice of using multicultural principles in schools in Ukraine and the world. In this work we also used the method of abstraction, which provides for ascending from the abstract to the concrete. It is used in the analysis of general theoretical approaches and positions and the formation of recommendations for the use of

multicultural approaches in modern elementary school. Particular attention in the work is focused on empirical pedagogical methods of collecting and interpreting information. In particular, the problem of further implementation of multicultural principles of education is formed on the basis of the predictive method. The use of diagnostic methods through questioning and observation is also significant. Also, the study is formed as a result of the use of the statistical method, consisting in a qualitative analysis of the experimental data.

Our experimental study involved 500 people (parents of preschool children). This allowed us to illuminate the attitudes of modern Ukrainian parents toward multicultural education. Separately, 100 preschool children were interviewed (in an interview format). According to the results of this research, the readiness of modern Ukrainian preschool children to understand the multicultural problem was formed. In the future, it made it possible to form the following recommendations for the implementation of categories of multiculturalism in modern educational and upbringing processes in Ukraine. At the same time, the implementation of the proposed model of formation of multicultural competence in preschool students involved the intervention in the educational process of several institutions, in particular Preschool Education Institution 1, Preschool Education Institution 2.

The observation carried out at the ascertaining stage of the study involved the organization of a survey among parents of preschool children. The results were recorded and processed in an Excel spreadsheet.

RESULTS

We believe that as a result of specially organized multicultural environment the following tasks of multicultural education can be solved. It is not only about fostering respect for native culture or history, but also to familiarize with the achievements of foreign culture. It is also important to foster a tolerant and democratic attitude toward the historical and cultural achievements of other peoples and to form the basis of a culture of international communication (Cherng & Davis, 2019). Also, in the right multicultural environment other tasks are solved: stimulation of spiritual growth in preschool children and parents, laying the foundation of integrative vision of space in political, educational, economic prism, formation of brain activity in the child and development of general cognitive activity (Arsal, 2019). Note that the purposeful application of the basics of multicultural environment in the process of personality formation is seen as a means of ensuring a tolerant attitude to different peoples and their cultures. So, in our opinion, an important condition for the implementation of multicultural education is the functioning of multicultural educational environment. A number of studies have proved that the object of influence of the teacher is not the child or his/her quality or behavior, but the conditions in which he/she lives or learns. At the same time, in our opinion, any educational subject in preschools reveals certain pedagogical conditions of multicultural potential through its possibilities.

The results of the study are viewed through the prism of three perspectives: epistemological, ontological, and axiological. For example, ontologically, multicultural values contribute to the formation of a tolerant attitude toward different ethno-national groups. At the same time, the paradigm of multicultural education conditions the emergence of such value in the child as respect for the surrounding society with its ethnic, racial, and territorial aspects (Merewether, 2018). The ontological prism of multiculturalism contributes to the growth of ethnic studies, which, in turn, can find a place as part of the preschool curriculum.

As a result of the epistemological vision, multicultural education based on contemporary societal demands should lead to new knowledge. Through an axiological prism, the problem of the formation of multicultural competencies in preschool children is related to the study of values in learning or educational activities (Solehuddin & Budiman, 2019). At the same time, we believe that the final form of development of the model of formation of learning with a multicultural aspect is

the model obtained as a result of special pedagogical development, confirmed by experts, and tested through individual testing, or a group test.

In particular, as a result of a simple survey conducted among preschool children, their preferences in communication with other children belonging to other nationalities were established. The vast majority of preschoolers (over 57%) indicated that they did not care who they played together with, but preferred Ukrainians. More than 22% of respondents indicated that for them the ethnicity of the children did not matter, and they would spend time with those with whom it was fun. Slightly less than a third of respondents (32%) think it is easier and better for them to have fun with close friends or relatives. It is hard to connect this with a negative perception of other nationalities, more likely just a desire to have less interaction with unfamiliar children.

Interviews revealed that the preschoolers interviewed valued positive qualities in others the most: "kindness" (28.6%), "humor" (14.2%), and "fun" (16.9%). Only a few noted that "restraint," "politeness," etc. were relevant to them. Moreover, they placed the suggested qualities above nationality, that is, for them it was not a problem.

A further experiment was aimed at clarifying the qualities with which preschool children assessed themselves (we are talking about self-esteem). Preschoolers were asked to choose those qualities which, in their own opinion, were characteristic of them (with an actual emphasis on making connections with others). The summary results of the survey revealed that the preschool children primarily (61.5%) considered these qualities as cordiality, intelligence, neatness (18.5%), and respect for others (20%).

Summary results of the survey are shown in Table 1, which is located below in the text.

Table 1. Levels of multicultural perception in preschool children.

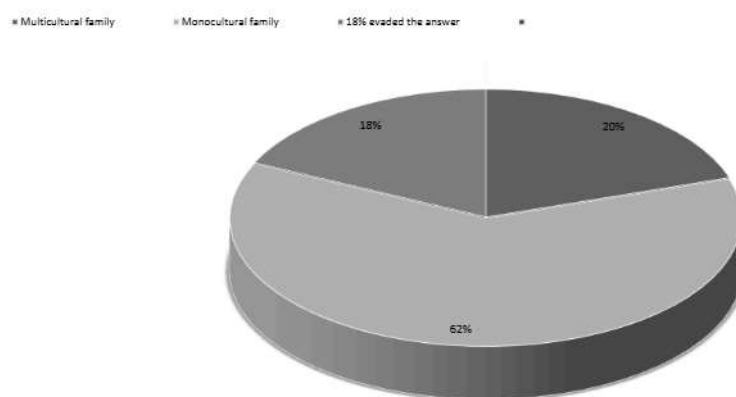
Level	Explanation	Number of preschoolers (%)
High	The preschooler is able to identify himself or herself as a representative of a particular ethnic group, knowing his or her customs and traditions. At the same time, he/she knows enough about the features of other peoples and shows a tolerant attitude towards them. Also adheres to certain norms in personal behavior in relation to representatives of other races.	20%
Medium	The child has general knowledge about his or her own nation and its cult. Shows interest in the history, culture, and traditions of other peoples, has private knowledge of their features. In general, shows a neutral attitude towards representatives of different ethnic groups.	61, 5
Low	The preschooler is not able to tell specifically about the features of his or her people, that is, he or she has superficial knowledge about his or her ethnicity. He or she does not have an elementary understanding of other cultures. Such children are characterized by a low level of tolerance for other ethnic groups. In addition, they show a lack of practical experience and understanding of correct behavior with representatives of other races.	18, 5

An important aspect, in our opinion, is the understanding and interest of parents in the further development of this direction, as revealed in the survey. Note that for the post-Soviet country (with the old traditions of a certain chauvinistic attitude toward "foreigners") such a question is extremely relevant. In order to analyze the desire of parents of preschool children to familiarize their children with education, a survey was conducted, the results of which showed that parents are generally correct in their understanding of the essence and importance of this process.

In particular, almost 42% of parents complained that they did not have enough time and would be much more willing to communicate with their children. More than 36% of parents say they know their children's interests, but do not always approve of them. When asked about acquainting their children with cultural values, traditions, and customs of the Ukrainian nation, 78.5% of parents said yes, 21.5% of parents admitted that they partially do it. No one admitted ignoring this aspect of upbringing. Only 18% of parents acquaint their children with achievements of other cultures, barely 20% of respondents called their family multicultural. But more than 62% consider the circle of their relatives as monocultural, while about 18% evaded the answer. Parents almost do not tell foreign fairy tales, proverbs, etc., stopping only at the English-language ones (they believe that this will contribute to the education of their children).

A summary of the survey results is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Share of multicultural families in Ukrainian society.



The results of the questionnaire show that in families with a low degree of parental education there is a poor state of multicultural upbringing (in general - education in general). In other families the Ukrainian language and the history of their people are respected. At the same time, partly here they do not distribute children by ethnicity, but prefer to focus on moral qualities. Such families are loyal to the study of cultures of other ethnic groups, which contributes to the personal growth of preschool children. More numerous, however, is the category of families that treat other ethnicities neutrally, showing no interest in their way of life. Children here do not show open antipathy to others but contact with them is reluctant - only with good acquaintances.

This correlates with world practice (Walter, 2017). Such results indicate the need for further targeted work of preschool institutions in the field of education of tolerant personalities (Acar-Ciftci, 2016).

Modern conceptual principles of civic education of personality in Ukraine consist of the formation of the necessary competencies to participate in the socio-political and economic life of their own country, communication skills, respect for the rights and opinions of others, the ability to make the right decisions. All the proposed qualities are the result of work and learning in preschool age (Kosheleva, 2019). This is the initial stage of the formation of a citizen, requiring that educators instill in preschool children respect for the culture and traditions of both their own people and other ethnic groups.

Also, taking into account the results of the experimental study, it is important to highlight further recommendations for the implementation of multicultural aspects in the system of education of preschool children. First of all, it is important to identify and implement such

pedagogical conditions: creating a direct multicultural environment in preschool educational institutions, the presence of consistency in the formation of competence of multicultural education, which will ensure the unity of both practical skills and theoretical knowledge (Nasution & Rudiyanto, 2021).

Let us note that the age peculiarities of the younger preschool children have a certain importance in the process of forming multicultural competence. From the physiological point of view there is a complex process of constant physical and mental development in the child's body. At this age, the child is forming the basics of moral behavior and rules of conduct in different situations. From this time a long process of personality formation begins. A preschool child develops qualities that allow him or her to exist in a collective environment, and the category of tolerance is one of them. Directly the process of multicultural education or upbringing is complicated and long, at the same time the teacher should use various mechanisms designed to form children's multicultural competence. These mechanisms include special conversations (both individual and collective), training, collective practical activities, and a variety of extracurricular activities.

We believe that one of the effective means of implementing multicultural education is the study of a foreign language or members of a multicultural society. For this reason, it is rational to give preference to means that would not only diversify the educational process (Warren, 2017), but also turn the educational process into an interesting action in order to form in children not only a desire to learn other languages, but also to form their interest in other cultures.

Let us emphasize that the fine arts contribute to multicultural education, where children can draw on historical themes, plots of fairy tales, paintings, consider national costumes, practically create different ornaments, sketches of elements of paintings, etc. Such activity will allow the child not only to improve the knowledge of his or her culture, but also to realize the versatility of other cultures of the world. We believe that thematic drawing of preschool children on the subjects of fairy tales of different peoples is an excellent and effective tool for the formation and education of love for their native people, as well as a certain sympathy for the representatives of other nationalities or races. In general, fairy tales of all nations are characterized by the display of universal values; they express centuries-old national hopes, people's aspiration to happiness, the struggle for truth and justice, etc. Also, fairy tales of different peoples reflect the ideas of mutual respect of people of other ethnic groups, the categories of human dignity and equality. At the same time for the formation of multicultural competence it is also important to directly acquaint preschool children with works of applied art, which peculiarly and originally demonstrate the artistic traditions of the nation, worldview, and artistic experience of the people preserve the historical memory (Kosheleva, 2019). At the same time, as a result of the analysis of the world works of applied art, children will be able to become more familiar with the cultural heritage of the world, to understand the artistic specificity of any nation.

In the system of extracurricular work, the education of tolerance in a multicultural society can be realized through the organization of various general measures: reading and discussion of books; demonstration of films with subsequent discussion; acquaintance with works of applied art of different nations; visits to museums, theaters, exhibitions, etc. No less important is the multicultural orientation of general conversations with preschool children. Collective creative works, when each child makes his contribution to the common cause, have a great educational value. Collective creative activities promote children's benevolent relationships and emotional perception of others, effective interaction in solving common tasks (Solehuddin & Budiman, 2019). At the same time, it also affects the formation of tolerance in a multicultural children's group. Other shared cognitive tasks allow for tolerance of other children's opinions while maintaining one's individuality.

Since the multicultural developmental environment is an integrated category in which a variety of spheres of activity of a preschooler are placed, it is important to provide special

conditions, a stable psychological atmosphere. They should influence the development of a tolerant and democratic attitude among all participants in the educational or upbringing process. The latter should be based on mutual understanding, respect, readiness to perceive people of other nationalities. It is also equally important to comply with the main criteria of personality-centered approach in the formation of preschool children tolerant attitude to representatives of other nationalities, religions, etc. (Slamet et al., 2021). However, the mentioned recommendatory conditions can be effective only with the increase of multicultural education of parents.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the problem under study demonstrates the ambiguity of the formation of multicultural competence among preschool children in Ukraine. On the one hand, there is an understanding of the necessity of this process and the support of state regulatory bodies. On the other hand, the practice focuses on other, probably less important, things.

A large role in primary education is assigned to educators. The coordinated work of a multicultural society is possible in conditions of dissemination among its citizens of a system of universal values. In particular, these include the most important and comprehensive mastery of the achievements of their own folk culture, tolerant attitude toward others from other cultural backgrounds, the emphasis on the formation of skills and abilities of active dialogue with representatives of other nationalities. A positive aspect of accomplishing the educational tasks is obtaining an appropriate degree of multicultural competence of the teachers. This is caused by the fact that the formation of the worldview of preschool children in many aspects depends on the worldview of educators. They enrich preschool children's experience in multicultural communication, which is very important for their future life. Given this aspect, the professional training of educators, their own mastery of the principles of multicultural education are extremely important elements in the current ethnic and cultural diversity of Ukrainian society.

A separate problem is the need for patriotic education at an early stage. The question of the early formation of national values among preschool children can be realized only in the educational process, which will promote the establishment of a counter movement of folk cultures, the bearers of which historically live side by side - this provides for mutual interest, mutual exploration, and active communication. An essential element of civic education among preschool children must be the development of a multicultural vision. Children must see the diversity of cultures for themselves, know them not from the pages of textbooks, but feel sympathy for the national dance culture, entertainment, fairy tales of other nations, understand the folkloric origins of different cultures.

In our opinion, multicultural education should be prepared according to the following algorithm:

1. Emphasis on national education. It is about instilling respect for the dignity, history and language of their people, an interest in their cultural and historical achievements.
2. Familiarization of preschool children with representatives of the nearest ethnic circle, formation of a benevolent attitude toward peers and adults of other nations, based on research of habits and traditions of related nations, in particular with an emphasis on learning foreign languages.
3. An account of the ethnic identity of people from distant countries, with an emphasis on historical and domestic traditions.
4. Formation of an emotionally positive attitude towards manifestations of national diversity.

The results of the above algorithm for acquaintance with multiculturalism can be formulated as follows: mastering the basics of patriotic and civic feelings; formation of the idea of ethnic identity.

The proposed scheme can be a subject for discussion in the following publications, because in the modern Ukrainian and world pedagogical opinion there are different approaches to the understanding of the formation of patriotism at the present stage of the development of globalization processes.

In general, under multicultural education we understand the process of assimilation by preschool children the values and experience of other ethnic groups in the region where they live, with special emphasis on the study of their cultural achievements and characteristics. Diving into the history and culture of their land will allow children to trace not only individual characteristics of traditional cultures of other ethnic groups, but also independently find out certain algorithms of their coexistence and mutual influences. At the same time, when considering the cultures of multi-ethnic regions, common national and human values will be assimilated.

Modern national education in Ukraine is an important pedagogical element, contributing to the awareness of preschool children of their ethnic and national identity, the development of feelings of national pride. From such positions of cultural awareness, the child will have the opportunity to understand and explore with interest the cultures of other ethnic groups, to feel benevolence and respect for the representatives of other nations.

In the operating conditions of Ukrainian pre-schools, the implementation of competency-based approaches is complicated by the exacerbation of the economic factor, since the current problem is still the provision of scientific and methodological, technical, and educational materials. However, it should be noted that in recent years there is an orderly practice of forming special groups to study the problems of using the competence approach in the work of preschool institutions. Both in the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and among representatives of territorial communities there is an understanding that such innovations are mandatory requirements of our time. The implementation of this awareness at the legislative and local levels is a separate problem, which today has not been finally implemented, but will be an important issue for further research through the prism of further implementation of multicultural competence in the education of preschool children.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the level of multicultural education affects the definition of a person's way of life and way of thinking, the breadth of his/her ethno-cultural and educational interests, the needs and development of value orientations. In addition, multicultural education also provides recognition, acceptance and understanding of ethno-cultural differences, features, which determines the readiness to preserve, reproduce, multiply ethno-cultural values, formation of special abilities of inter-ethnic dialog interaction, adaptation to life in a multi-ethnic environment.

Therefore, in today's conditions of development of society, forming the basics of multicultural competence of preschool children in Ukraine is an urgent task. Current efforts to overcome the post-Soviet stereotypical thinking, fixated on the paradigm of "our own-foreign", encounter certain difficulties, connected both with a lack of understanding of the need for a multicultural perception of the world around, and with a certain slowness of the response of the state mechanism to the current challenges.

At the same time, the work proves on the basis of empirical material that the transformation is inevitable, because the survey showed a favorable attitude of children to preschoolers to foreigners and the desire of parents to deepen this program. According to our author's definition, multicultural education should be understood as a process of assimilating the values and experiences of other ethnic groups of the region where they live, with special emphasis on the study of their cultural achievements and folk characteristics.

We believe that, in general, multicultural education should be aimed at meeting the educational needs of representatives of different nationalities, preparing children for life in a

multicultural society. Consequently, this leads to a number of pedagogical tasks, among them we will single out:

1. Understanding the separateness of one's own people, defining their culture, traditions, and customs
2. Formation of competence of diversity of cultures in Ukraine and the world
3. Understanding and acceptance of equal rights of all peoples in the world.
4. Upbringing of tolerant attitude to cultural differences as factors of development of modern world civilization space.
5. Creation of certain conditions for integration into the culture of other ethnic groups.
6. Formation of skills regarding productive interaction with bearers of other cultures.
7. Upbringing with a peaceful attitude to the environment.
8. Formation of conscious value orientations in modern society.

Important obstacles to the further implementation of multicultural education are the difficulties with the necessary material support, the difficulties with some aspects of state regulation. At the same time, these problems can become objects for further scientific research. In particular, it is important to work out the necessary legal basis for effective implementation of multicultural education. Its comparative analysis with European normative practices will help to identify the vulnerabilities and strengths of the Ukrainian system.

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