ВАЖНОСТЬ МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРНОГО ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

Аннотация. В настоящее время в быстро меняющемся экономическом и политическом контексте мира потребность в межкультурном общении и взаимопонимании становится как никогда острой. В связи с быстро растущими взаимосвязями между всеми странами, особенно когда мы сталкиваемся с глобальными проблемами, связанными с экосистемой, ядерным оружием, терроризмом, правами человека и скудными национальными ресурсами, важность мультикультурного образования возрастает. Важность мультикультурного образования признавалась веками в обществах, которые были мультикультурными по своему составу. Фактически, грузинское общество было мультикультурным с самого начала из-за своего расположения на перекрестке дорог из Азии в Европу. Сосуществование многих наций, языков, культур и религий было сутью грузинского наследия. Глобальные изменения, происходящие в мире, превратили дисциплину мультикультурного образования в насущную потребность. В связи с этим люди, ответственные за систему образования, и лица, определяющие политику, стремятся обеспечить равные возможности в образовании и сохранить уникальные и национальные особенности своей страны. Мультикультурное позволяет студентам не только приобрести необходимые навыки и развить позитивное отношение к общению и взаимодействию, но также способствует принятию и терпимости людей из разных культур для создания морально здорового гражданского общества.

Ключевые слова: мультикультурное образование, высшее образование, глобализация, межкультурное общение, «глобальная деревня», культура, обмен студентами

THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Abstract. Nowadays in the quickly changing economic and political context of world, the need for cross-cultural communication and understanding becomes more urgent than ever. With the rapidly growing interconnections among all nations, particularly as we face global issues related to the ecosystem, nuclear weapons, terrorism, human rights, and scarce national resources, the importance of multicultural education increases. The importance of multicultural education has been acknowledged for centuries in societies which were multicultural by composition. Georgian society has been multicultural, in fact, from the very beginning, due to its location at the crossroads from Asia to Europe. Co-existence of many nations, languages, cultures, and religions has been the essence of Georgian heritage. The global changes taking place in the world have turned the discipline of multicultural education into an urgent need. In connection with this, people responsible for educational system and policy makers seek how to both facilitate equal opportunities in education and preserve the unique and national features of their country. A multicultural education provides equal educational opportunities to learners from diverse ethnic cultural groups and social classes. It enables students not only to acquire the necessary skills and develop a positive attitude to communication and interaction, but also fosters acceptance and tolerance of individuals from various cultures in order to create a morally healthy civil community.

Key words: multicultural education, higher education, globalization, cross-cultural communication, 'global village', culture, student exchange

Nowadays in the quickly changing economic and political context of world, the need for cross-cultural communication and understanding becomes more urgent than ever. With the rapidly growing interconnections among all nations, particularly as we face global issues related to the ecosystem, nuclear weapons, terrorism, human rights, and scarce national resources, the importance of multicultural education increases.

The importance of multicultural education has been acknowledged for centuries in societies which were multicultural by composition. Georgian society has been multicultural, in fact, from the very beginning, due to its location at the crossroads from Asia to Europe.

Co-existence of many nations, languages, cultures, and religions has been the essence of Georgian heritage. Georgian multiculturalism dates back historically to ancient times when different ethnic groups came in contact with one another through migration from one region to another.

Georgia was formed at the border of the second and first millennium BC by two major tribes (the Diakhi and the Qolkha), in the 7-8 century BC this union disintegrated into several tribes who later developed either Kartvelian languages or dialects of the Georgian language. Later the Greeks colonized the Black Sea coast, then the Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Seljuk Turks and Mongols came. All of them, although they came to make the agriculturally productive and politically strategic lands theirs, also brought their cultures. In its turn, Georgia of the 11-13th centuries, when it flourished most, Kipchaghs (Chechens) and some other nations from the North Caucasus settled in Georgia. Much later, when Georgia became part of the Russian Empire, many religious minorities fled to Georgia, to enjoy being far from the center of the Empire and to benefit from traditional Georgian tolerance. During the Soviet rule people of many cultures came to live in Georgia (as well as Georgians went to live in other parts of the USSR), due to professional, family and climatic reasons [18].

Today many foreign specialists work in contemporary independent Georgia, their family members attend school and tertiary education institutions. Georgia continues to manifest a high degree of multiculturalism. The increase of the number of international students coming to study in Georgia took place since 2005 when Georgia joined the Bologna process. It is beneficial to study here due to a combination of reasonable tuition fees and living expenditures, quality and recognition of higher education, safety, liberal legislation, tolerance and hospitality. As a result, the Georgian education system is made up of students from various national backgrounds. This tradi-

tionally multicultural environment makes the issue of multicultural education a very significant one [6].

The multicultural approach to education is rooted in early 20th century United States, in attempts by teacher Davis DuBois to construct a curriculum that would be suitable for his diverse student population, which consisted of students from several different ethnic groups. Due to the strong emphasis on Americanization taking place at the time (World War I), teachers tended to ignore the cultural heritage of many ethnic groups and to present American history one-dimensionally. Thus the education of that period required that all students of the multicultural country boiled in the same bowl and became culturally the same. However, the approach only caused social problems. Dubois developed "The Woodbury Plan" – a multicultural curriculum that covered immigrant cultures as well as information on the history of ethnic and racial communities in the United States [10]. On a large scale the movement for equal rights for various races and ethnicities in the US evolved with Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, emphasizing the humanistic and democratic ideas and since then has been spreading worldwide [8].

In the 'global village' practically all countries are involved in undergraduate and graduate student exchange. "Global village" means all parts of the world as they are being brought together by the internet and other electronic communication interconnections. The term was coined by Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan [12, 13, 14].

While some societies (like Georgia) have initially been multiethnic and to a certain degree made some efforts of multicultural education (e.g., education in various languages, incorporation of some multicultural issues in curriculum and syllabi), other societies (like South Korea) used to be rather mono-ethnic and have changed only since the 1980s [7, 9]. Nowadays, due to globalization, international students are doing their studies and international teachers also are teaching around the globe.

Academic and public discussion on the topic of multiculturalism in all its aspects takes place in a wide range of domains. However, the understanding that multicultural education and the ability to create multicultural societies are mutually dependent is the issue that

has transformed multicultural education into a separate discipline – constituting the very heart of multicultural activity [17].

The presence of students from various cultures does not automatically turn education into a multicultural one. Only the education that takes into consideration the interests and needs of students belonging to various cultures (within a country or between countries) can be regarded as truly multicultural.

“Multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different (non-majority) cultural backgrounds” [3, p.206].

Banks & McGee Banks define multicultural education “as a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good” [4, p. xi].

Multicultural education appreciates cultural differences, instead of viewing them as deficiencies (compared to the dominant culture), and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect.

According to Banks & McGee Banks [5] multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement and a process. Multicultural education involves the contents of education represented in curricula, syllabi, lessons and extracurricular events, attitudes and relationships between students, teachers, administration and wider society.

The following fundamental beliefs and assumptions of multicultural education are mentioned by Litheko [11]:

- There is strength and value in promoting cultural diversity;
- Educational institutions should be models for the expression of human rights and respect for cultural diversity;
- Social justice and equality for all people should be of paramount importance in the design and delivery of curricula;

- Attitudes and values necessary for the continuation of a democratic society, can be promoted in educational institutions;
- Finally, institutions involved in community services, can create an environment that is supportive of multiculturalism.

Ameny-Dixon [1] mentions the following long-term benefits of the global perspective of multicultural education:

1. Multicultural education increases productivity because a variety of mental resources are available for completing the same tasks and it promotes cognitive and moral growth among all people.
2. Multicultural education increases creative problem-solving skills through the different perspectives applied to same problems to reach solutions.
3. Multicultural education increases positive relationships through achievement of common goals, respect, appreciation, and commitment to equality among the intellectuals at institutions of higher education.
4. Multicultural education decreases stereotyping and prejudice through direct contact and interactions among diverse individuals.
5. Multicultural education renews vitality of society through the richness of the different cultures of its members and fosters development of a broader and more sophisticated view of the world.

The global changes taking place in the world have turned the discipline of multicultural education into an urgent need. In connection with this, people responsible for educational system and policy makers seek how to both facilitate equal opportunities in education and preserve the unique and national features of their country. Numerous research studies carried out in the field of multicultural education, prove the importance of the ideas of multicultural education for higher education, since one of its aims is considered to be students' intellectual enrichment and readiness to live and communicate in the multinational world [15].

One of the ways to make young people competent members of the multicultural society is teaching foreign languages by linking them both to students' cultures and other world's cultures. Engaging students in social life and helping them communicate with people of other nationalities and religious groups in order to solve their personal and study problems, foreign language teachers should act effectively through joint engagement by using cultural tools [16]. The stu-

dents should be taught about different cultures as part of Foreign Language classes since social interactions and engagement is a key to a successful life experience for them [2]. Foreign language teachers are to help them feel more competent with less anxiety when communicating in the cross-cultural society.

A multicultural education provides educational opportunities to learners from diverse ethnic cultural groups and social classes. It enables students not only to acquire skills and develop a positive attitude to communication and interaction, but also fosters acceptance and tolerance to individuals from various cultures in order to create a morally healthy and civil community.

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