

Development of Intercultural Competence during Pedagogical Practice of Ukrainian Students in Vocational Schools in Slovakia

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Abstract:

Introduction: In the presented paper, the role of practical training in the formation of intercultural competencies is considered in terms of Dublin descriptors on the basis of educational intercultural practice.

Methods: For the purposes of the study, a multi-stage model of intercultural practice was developed. The method of comparative analysis showed the correspondence of the model to the main descriptors. The study is based on the results of intercultural practice of Ukrainian students in vocational schools in Slovakia.

Results: It has been shown that the four levels of practice in the form of short-term introductory intercultural practice, ethno-cultural educational practice, scientific and pedagogical communication practice abroad, as well as long-term intercultural training correspond to the Dublin competence descriptors in the form of knowledge, skills, communication, autonomy and responsibility.

Discussion: The results of the research show the directions in the formation of intercultural competencies of students. Close cultures such as the Ukrainian and the Slovak can be a launching pad for building deeper competencies. The pedagogical practice of Slovak and Ukrainian students develops the intercultural competencies of both the trainees and the students.

Limitations: The study was conducted in a limited number of educational institutions in Ukraine and Slovakia. It is expected to increase their number on the principles of reciprocity in order to develop intercultural competencies in the students of the two countries.

Conclusions: The model is practically implemented in the process of the teaching practice of Ukrainian students in selected schools in Slovakia. An increase in the level of intercultural competencies was observed both in the Ukrainian students and in the students of Slovak schools.

Key words: intercultural competence, pedagogical practice, Dublin descriptors.

Introduction

A common approach to the formation of the content of education in modern conditions is the process of forming of professional competencies (Dobrovská & Andres, 2016; Tamášová, 2015). In terms of Dublin descriptors, such professional competencies are

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understood as a set of knowledge, skills, communication, autonomy and responsibility of the educator.

Taking into account the global civilization changes, the reality of student and professional mobilities, the orientation of young people on professional activities in other countries or cultures, it is very important for the graduates to have a special competence, which, in many sources, is interpreted as intercultural competence (Yarosh, Lukic, & Santibáñez-Gruber, 2018; Nascimbeni, Burgos, Aceto, Stefanelli, & Eldeib, 2018).

Educational internationalization is considered here as an obligatory part of the training of a specialist, and the intercultural competence is considered a complex component, including the need for learning a foreign language and building communication skills, but also knowledge, skills, and actions (Huang, 2018).

The formation of intercultural competence represents a significant pedagogical problem due to its breadth and depth, as well as the novelty of its relevance (Sobre, 2017).

The practice of intercultural education is becoming one of the most important issues in the multicultural Europe. Typically, for the formation of the intercultural competence, special courses are usually offered for the fields of study related to education, international relations, and business (Golubeva & Guntersdorfer, 2017). Constant social changes require intercultural training of professionals from various professions.

Theoretical models of teaching about the intercultural relationships, as a rule, include a number of consistently emerging competencies (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). At the same time, in our opinion, competences can be best developed in the process of practical training. Some experiences from introducing intercultural practices to students are described in several works (Kilgo, Ezell Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015; Barreto & Haydar, 2016). It seems to us that the system of intercultural practices aimed at necessary competencies has been not fully developed.

Dunlap and Mapp (2017) drew attention to the fact that international internship increases intercultural sensitivity, professionalism, and the growth of information about the impact of the culture on professional activities. However, to achieve these desired results, targeted training is required. The authors of this work recommend an additional training course for students preparing for international internships. The curriculum of this discipline is aimed to help students increase their self-awareness and critical attitude towards their culture, develop their perception of cultural values and peculiarities of the organization of professional activities in the destination country, and study the practical aspects of travelling and living abroad.

Mody, Gordon, Lehto and Adler (2016) argue that the benefits of intercultural and personal development, obtained during the course abroad, have a significant indirect effect on student entrepreneurship. Such foreign practices considerably facilitate the immersion in the life and culture of another country. The impact of the educational practice abroad in countries with small and big cultural distances is considered.

He, Lundgren and Pynes (2017) considered the issues of developing a short-term study program abroad and concluded that such practices should develop not only the intercultural competence but also professional skills and beliefs.

Buchanan (2017) points out the importance of previous theoretical training in the field of cultural research before the practice. An analysis of the work of teachers in a different cultural environment showed that they had to understand the new organizational and

cultural environment in the course of practice. The paper discusses the possibility of normalizing the transitional stage in the course of the practice in a different culture.

Andryukhina and Fadeyeva (2016) proposed an approach in the form of creative practices that are planned as integrated forms of learning to enhance the intercultural competence. At the same time, practices are integrated into special intercultural tasks and standard approaches that ensure the formation of intercultural competencies.

The aim of this work is to modify the system of practical training of students in terms of the development of their intercultural competence based on the stages and levels of academic practice within the framework of cooperation between Ukrainian and Slovak universities.

1 Model development

Considering any practice as an element of the learning process, it is necessary to identify certain features and stages of this process. The formation of a certain component of competence provided by the stage of the educational process will be projected in the form of a step-by-step process.

1.1 Staging

In the process of preparing for the practice, it is necessary to understand the problem that will be solved during it. We must realize that the actual development of competencies should be realized in the process of practical activities. A student must overcome the difficulties that arise in real life. Therefore, perhaps in the process of designing a task in practice, the teacher must foresee certain situations.

- 1) *The stage of conceptualization* involves the development of abilities that determine the unity of understanding the basic concepts and definitions that should be used during practice.
- 2) *The stage of formulating goals* includes the practical comprehension of the student's desired result of practice. The formulation of goals should be consistent with the trainees' level and the level of practical training.
- 3) *The stage of motivation* is determined by the student's interest in the results of the practice. Such an interest can be in the form of
 - a) situational interest – when the student is motivated to continue in his/her education and the subsequent formation of the intercultural competence;
 - b) stable interest – when the student realizes the importance of practical training for gaining professional intercultural competencies; and
 - c) interest as an attitude when the student recognizes the importance of the acquired competencies in terms of life and non-production activities in conditions of other countries.
- 4) *The material stage* of the practice involves the implementation of the main actions to achieve the goals.
- 5) *The stage of reflection* is determined by students' self-esteem and the degree to which the results were in accordance with the set goals.

In order to form practical skills in shaping the intercultural competence of future teachers of practical training in the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogical Academy (UEPA), it is envisaged to conduct multi-level training practices during education (Figure 1).

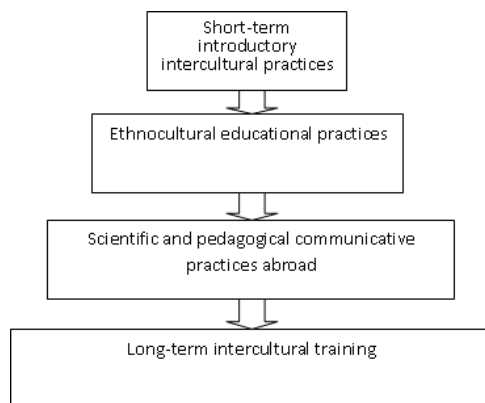


Figure 1. Intercultural practice levels practice (developed by the author).

Short-term practice at universities and enterprises abroad offers the resolution of the contradiction between the traditions of national education and the Pan-European and world-wide approaches.

The next stage in the formation of the intercultural competence is represented by ethno-cultural educational practice in different European countries, which include designing, technological actions, taking into account the existing ethno-cultural norms, and developing respect for their culture in the world system of cultural values, and determine the ability to perform basic design activities both in the native and foreign cultures.

Table 1

Characteristics of levels of intercultural practice (developed by the author)

	<i>Kind of practice</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Materialization</i>	<i>Reflection</i>
1	Short-term foreign practices at universities and enterprises	Short-term goals. Preparation of the students for the perception of further competences, awareness of the place of their own culture.	Acquaintance with the peculiarities of studying abroad, organization of labor and educational processes.	Self-identification of differences in approaches to teaching and design with national peculiarities
2	Ethno-cultural educational practices in other countries	Medium-term goals. Formation of readiness to represent its cultural identity in a global world	Designing, technological actions taking into account ethno-cultural norms	Ability to perform basic designing activities in the native and other culture
3	Scientific pedagogical communicative practices abroad	Medium-term goals. Preparation for implementation of real tasks, acquisition of communication skills with representatives of other cultures.	Conducting test lessons in a non-cultural and foreign-language audience	Effectiveness of communication actions in the process of transfer of information with representatives of other cultures
4	Long-term professional internships	Long-term goals. Formation of persistent intercultural competences with direct possibility of work in the intercultural environment	Realization of realistic tasks in designing or teaching in a multicultural environment.	The ability to perform practical tasks independently or manage group leadership.

The next level of practical training is the scientific pedagogical communicative practice abroad, which, for example, is realized on the basis of an agreement with the Vocational School of Economics and Business in Prešov (Slovak Republic). In the course of conducting classes for students in foreign educational institutions, communication skills are formed. Communication skills are developed in foreign language audiences (considering that English is not their mother tongue). A respect for cultural specificities of other countries and the ability to use these features at work are promoted.

The highest level of pedagogical training of the teachers of practical training can be realized in the form of long-term professional internships. Such internships, in particular, may be realized on the basis of the world youth organization AIESEC. Such practices develop the ability to perform realistic design or teaching tasks in a multicultural environment.

The goals and the possibilities of materialization in the process of the formation of the intercultural competence are given by the stage of practical training. The characteristics at different stages are listed in the Table 1.

A comparison of the proposed levels of practical training with the known descriptors that determine the formation of competences allow us to form a scheme of accumulation of descriptors in the process of practical training (Figure 2).

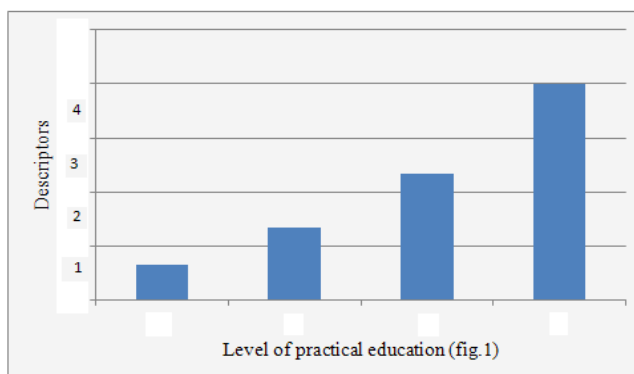


Figure 2. Formation of descriptors of intercultural competence during practical training. 1 - knowledge, 2 - skills, 3 - communication, 4 - autonomy and responsibility practice (developed by the author).

Figure shows compliance of the levels of practical training with the main descriptors of intercultural competence.

2 Practical realization

The given model of the formation of the intercultural competence in the process of practical training was tested during the training of students in the field of study “Vocational Education. Design”. This field of study requires the use of both general cultural and ethno-cultural features, familiarization with the achievements of other countries and peoples, the basics of communication in different languages.

In order to introduce this approach, educational institutions in Slovakia, as a country close to the Ukrainian mentality and cultural traditions, were selected in the first step.

The Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogical Academy in Kharkov has a great experience in cooperation with universities and vocational schools in Slovakia. The orientation of the training at UEPA provides the graduates with an opportunity to work as teachers in vocational technical schools.

The reform of education in Ukraine, which is currently taking place, is aimed at bringing the European education system closer. In particular, in Ukraine, it is supposed to create an analogue with the educational institutions known in Slovakia as “Secondary School of Business”.



Figure 3. Students of the Ukrainian Engineering and Pedagogical Academy during their pedagogical practice at the Secondary School of Business.

All these arguments predetermined the verification of our assumptions in Slovakia during the pedagogical training of Ukrainian students in educational institutions of Slovakia.

For the above purposes, a contract was signed with the vocational business school in Preshov (Stredná odborná škola podnikania, Prešov). The preparatory phase included working out a cooperation agreement, a contract on the practice of students from the UEPA in Slovakia, and a plan for the practice. During online communication with professionals, action plans were clarified, cultural and educational features of Slovakia were studied (Figure 3).





Figure 4. Conducting classes by UEPA students with students Secondary School of Business.

In course of the practice, a number of lessons were conducted by UEPA students; during classes, the cultural features of the two countries were taken into account (Figure 4). It should be noted that classes were held in English, which is neither the Ukrainian nor the Slovak students' mother tongue.

The practice has lead to an increase in the level of intercultural competencies of the Ukrainian students as well as the Slovak students.

After finishing the practice, the average level of the students' intercultural competence – both the teacher trainees' and the vocational school students' – was measured. This level was considered the overall indicator of the level of foreign language proficiency, the level of psychological compatibility, and the level of cultural intelligence of the professional intercultural level.

The results of the comparison of the percentages of different levels of intercultural competence before and after the practice for students and pupils are shown in Figure 5.

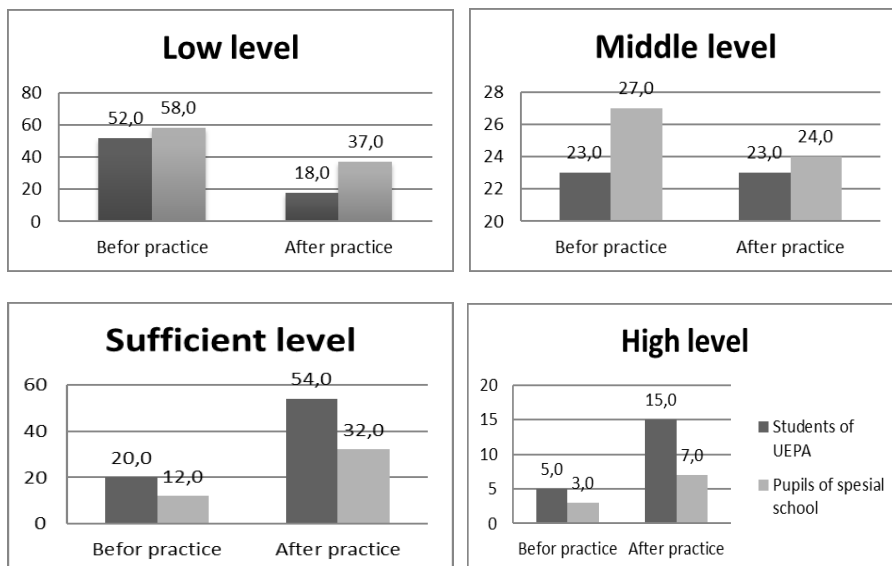


Figure 5 Changes in the level of the intercultural competence before and after the practice (developed by the author)

It is important that an increase in the level of intercultural competence was observed not only among Ukrainian students. This is the main purpose of the practice. The level of the intercultural competence among pupils at the vocational school, where the students were practicing, increased, too. Thus, such a form of the organization of pedagogical practice is mutually beneficial to all parties.

Conclusion

The basic role in the development of the intercultural competence should be played by the practical training of university students in other countries.

The four levels of practical training include a short-term introductory intercultural practice, ethno-cultural educational practice, scientific and pedagogical communication practice abroad, and long-term intercultural training.

These levels correspond to the basic descriptors of the intercultural competence – knowledge, skills, communication, autonomy and responsibility. Thus, the proposed model can fulfil the conditions for the formation of this competence.

As a first step for approbation of the model, it is rational to choose close cultures, such as the cultures of Ukraine and Slovakia.

The real experience of passing intercultural practices by students of the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogical Academy in vocational schools in Slovakia has shown a significant increase in the level of the intercultural competence, both for students of Ukraine and for students in Slovakia.

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