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The Problem of Ethnic Tolerance Among Students of Modern Universities

The article focuses on an urgent problem of today's system of higher education – on the problem of ethnic tolerance in the process of training. The author carries out the study of the dynamics of ethnic tolerance among Russian students during coeducation with representatives of various ethnic groups. 120 people – second-year, third-year, and forth-year students – took part in the study. The author demonstrates that higher ethnic tolerance towards representatives of other cultures characterizes senior students.

Keywords: *ethnic tolerance, student's environment, tolerance type.*

At the present stage of development the Russian education system points to a key problem of today; it is the problem of interethnic relations in the educational process. Therefore, the formation of tolerance and strengthening of international and cross-cultural interactions is one of the main aims of the educational process in modern institutes of higher education. The introduction of new standards in the education system conducts to global changes in the system of higher professional education. Being guided by modern labour market needs, it is possible to see that employers' requirements for the quality of education of specialists have also changed; there are many new professions and specializations that leads to the population shift to large educational centers [7, 10]. The higher education institution is not only the educational, research center, but also the center of polycultural interactiontoday. Therefore the "ethnic tolerance" concept has been promptly introduced intothe educational process, especially recently. Ethnic tolerance and its structural components became a subject of modern psychological, social, political researches. In our society everybody has certain forms of intolerance, xenophobia, extremism, and terrorism; the problem of ethnic tolerance became an urgent one.

They treat ethnic tolerance as the person's ability to be tolerant to a mode of life of representatives of other ethnic communities, their behavior, national traditions, ideas, beliefs etc. They also understand ethnic tolerance as a personal construct being a part of the structure of social attitudes.

They attribute the following components to the structure of ethnic tolerance: cognitive (knowledge of features of cultural life of other ethnic groups, understanding of a phenomenon of tolerance etc.), emotional (relation to other ethnic groups), behavioural (manifestation of tolerant/intolerant behavior, aspiration to communication, and etc. with representatives of other ethnic groups).

Ethnic tolerance is formed in the sphere of consciousness and is closely connected with such a social and psychological factor as ethnic identity which is formed in the process of socialization, in the process of the formation of personal identity, passing a personal-psychological level (the person's understanding of self), then a socio-psy-

chological level when there is a formation of self-concept as a member of a certain group, i.e. there is a formation of ethnic identity.

Ethnic tolerance is externally reflected in calmness, self-control, abilities of the individual to endure unusual influences of a foreign culture for a long time without decrease in his/her adaptive opportunities. It is also shown in critical situations of interpersonal and intrapersonal choice, being accompanied by psychological tension. The degree of its expressiveness depends on the experience of communication of the person with representatives of other ethnic communities [1, 2, 3, 4]. Formation of ethnic tolerance is closely connected with economic, political and sociocultural conditions of the environment in which the student is developed [6, 9].

The mass media has a special influence on the formation of ethnic tolerance among students. Considering ethnic tolerance in connection with the activity of the mass media which covers the problems of international relations, it should be noted that their activity should be directed on the struggle against the ethnic and racial dissonance, against negative perception of representatives of other ethnic groups, against racial discrimination of representatives of other nationalities, and etc. Unfortunately, the majority of the mass media do not carry principles of humanity and tolerance.

It is necessary to remember that the student's age is the period of the formation of the future professional; it is also the period of the development of ethnic consciousness [2, 8, 11, 12, 14]. Uncertainty of a social position induces young people to self-determination search; instability of their value sphere makes them more susceptible to various influences. As a result, there is the development of intolerant attitudes, hyper identity in the sphere of ethnic consciousness. Long-term researches of the transformation of Russian society show a wide spread of an intolerant relation to representatives of other ethnic groups in the youth environment [5].

Students are an active part of society therefore the problem of ethnic tolerance in the high school environment becomes urgent and demand more active attention.

Studying features of the dynamics of ethnic tolerance and the dominating ethnic tolerance type among advanced students was the purpose of our research.

120 Russian second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students of the faculty of psychology were the object of research.

In the study we have used the following techniques: the "Tolerance Index" express questionnaire (G. Yu. Soldatova with co-authors) for the diagnostics of the general level of tolerance of personality; ethnic consciousness and its transformations in conditions of interethnic intensity we have diagnosed by "Types of Ethnic Identity" (G. Yu. Soldatova, S. V. Ryzhova); by the technique of "Diagnostics of the General Communicative Tolerance" (V. V. Boyko) we have diagnosedthe tolerant and intolerant attitudes of personality which are shown in communication by 9 scales. We have carried out data processing by means of a package of computer programs named "STATISTICA 6.0".

The research results.According to the "Tolerance Index" express questionnaire an average level of tolerance (tolerance index) prevails in the group of surveyed students; it means these respondents are characterized by the combination of tolerant and in-

tolerant traits. In some social situations they behave tolerantly, in others may demonstrate intolerance. In comparison with third-year and forth-year students, second-year students are characterized by lower values of the index of tolerance within its average values (fig. 1).
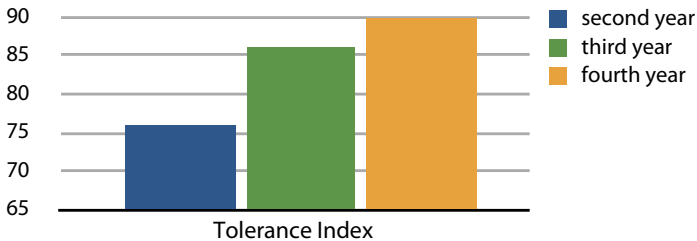

Fig. 1. Statistically reliable distinctions of the levels of tolerance among second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students by the results of the "Tolerance Index" express questionnaire (G. Yu. Soldatova with co-authors) ($p < 0,05$)

As we have told by the technique of "Diagnostics of the General Communicative Tolerance" (V. V. Boyko) we have diagnosed the tolerant and intolerant attitudes of personality which are shown in communication. The items of the questionnaire are grouped in 9 scales.

The scales:
– the rejection or misunderstanding of the identity of another person (scale I);
– the use of self as a standard at the assessment of behavior and views of other people (scale II);
– categoricalness or conservatism in estimates of other people (scale III);
– the inability to hide or smooth over unpleasant feelings when they encounter uncommunicative qualities of partners (scale IV);
– the aspiration to remake, re-educate partners (scale V);
– the aspiration to adjust the partner to self, to make him/her "convenient" (scale VI);
– the inability to forgive mistakes, blunders, involuntary troublesof other people (scale VII);
– the intolerance to physical or mental discomfort created by other people (scale VIII);
– theinability to adapt to the character, habits, and desires of others (scale IX).

It is shown that in comparison with third-year and fourth-year students, second-year students are characterized by high values of scales I, II, III, IV, V and VII(fig.2).

When comparing indices of scales of third-year and fourth-year students, third-year students have had higher indices of scales of II, III, IV, and IX (fig. 3).

The decrease in distinctions of indices of scales among students of older years may point to the fact that in the process of joint educational activity and effective in-

ternational and cross-cultural policy of the institute of higher education ethnic tolerance increases, national stereotypes of perception of representatives of various ethnic groups are effaced.
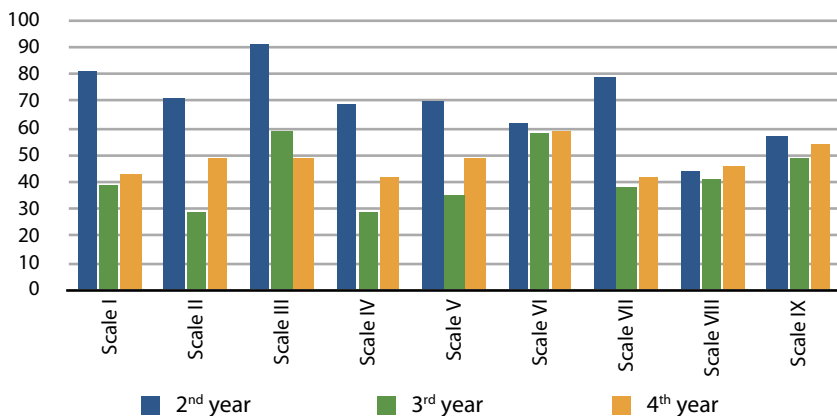

Fig. 2. Statistically reliable distinctions between groups of respondents by the technique of "Diagnostics of the General Communicative Tolerance" (V. V. Boyko) (p < 0,05)

Fig. 3. Statistically reliable distinctions between groups of respondents by the technique of "Diagnostics of the General Communicative Tolerance" (V. V. Boyko) (p < 0,05)

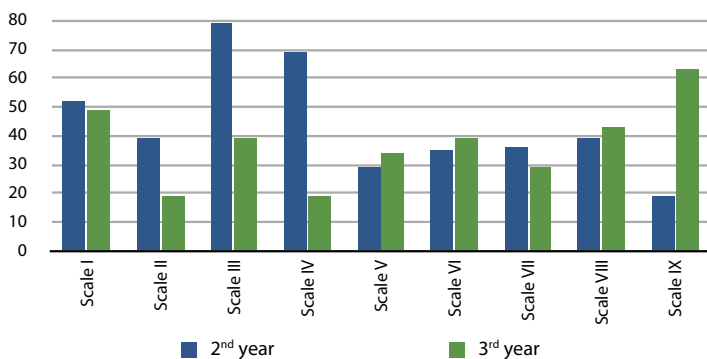When analyzing the obtained data by the technique "Types of Ethnic Identity" (G. Yu. Soldatova, S. V. Ryzhova) it is also possible to distinguish a distribution of certain types in the groups of respondents. The authors of the technique name the fol-

lowing types of ethnic tolerance: ethnonihilism, ethnic indifference, norm, ethnoego-ism, ethnoisolationism and ethnofanaticism.

The "ethnonihilism" type has prevailed among second-year students; this group of respondents is characterized by the departure from own ethnic group and search of steady social and psychological niches. Ethnic indifference was a prevailing ethnic type for third-year students; it means that they are characterized by the uncertainty of ethnic origin, irrelevance of ethnicity. Norm was a prevailing ethnic type for fourth-year students; it is an optimum balance of tolerance in relation to own and otherethnic groups. This type points to the fact that respondents have steadier values, ideals, high internal culture and harmonious personality (fig. 4).
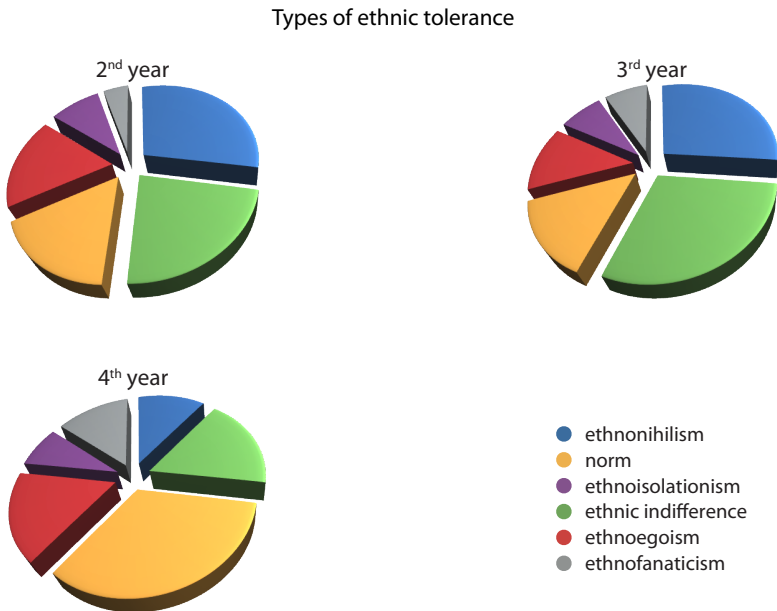
Types of ethnic tolerance

Fig. 4. Statistically reliable distinctions of distribution of types of ethnic tolerance in groups of respondents by the technique "Types of Ethnic Identity" (G. Yu. Soldatova, S. V. Ryzhova) (p < 0,05)

The carried out research has showed that the process of education leads to the de-crease in destructive stereotypes concerning representatives of one or another ethnic group, to increase in the quantity and quality of cross-cultural communications. There-fore the problem of the formation of tolerance and strengthening of international and cross-cultural interaction should become one of the main goals of the educational process in modern institutes of higher education. Thus, the approve federal special-purpose program "Formation of Attitudes of Tolerant Consciousness and Prevention of

Extremism in Russian Society" (2001–2005) assumes development and introduction of the special programs directed on formation of tolerant consciousness, toleration and training in cross-cultural dialogue in educational institutions.

However the policy of cross-cultural interaction it is very weak in modern higher education institutions today. It leads to that youth negatively perceives many national, religious and cultural phenomena which are an integral part of life of one or another ethnic group, in society where the xenophobia level increases.

In this regard it is necessary to develop the system of institutional approval, stimulation and support of tolerant behavior in modern institutes of higher education. In the process of professional training many institutes of higher education include disciplines focused on acquisition of professional skills by students, as well as on practical training in cross-cultural interaction [7, 13].

Many researchers say that within the process of education they need to form students' cross-cultural competence, develop personal qualities promoting successful social adaptation to a profession in modern cross-cultural conditions, effective ways of interaction in various professional and cross-cultural situations [7, 8, 13].

According to O. A. Selivanova there are some leading directions of counteraction to intolerant manifestations and extremist activity in the institute of higher education; these are:
– methodological and analytical support of prevention of extremism;
– normative-legal support of the system of prevention of extremism;
– organizational support of the functioning of the system of prevention of extremism [6].

This research demands further deepening in studying this subject matter. After all the phenomenon of ethnic tolerance is a dynamic construct which is subjected to the effect of external and internal factors, thus changing. After formation of tolerant attitudes in Russian society is a very complex challenge which is connected with a number of economic (standard of life of people, existence of social protection etc.), political (inadmissibility of international discord, toleration etc.) and socio-cultural (spiritual and moral crisis of society) difficulties.

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