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UKRAINE: REALITY AND PERSPECTIVES

Multicultural Competence of University Students in Ukraine: Reality and Perspectives

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# MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN UKRAINE: REALITY AND PERSPECTIVES

## **Multicultural Competence of University Students in Ukraine: Reality and Perspectives** *Olha POLIAKOVA<sup>1</sup>, Tetiana RIDEL,<sup>2</sup> Tetiana KYRYCHENKO,<sup>3</sup>*

### **Abstract**

The article deals with the problem of diagnosis and prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts in the students' environment. The aim of the article is to point out the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students' perception of inter-ethnic harmony value and their assessment of social situation in the inter-ethnic context; and to identify the level of multicultural competence of students of higher educational institutions as a factor in the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts in the students' environment. The cluster survey was conducted May 11-31, 2018 based on 3 universities in Sumy town, n1=382, n2=400, 17 – 23 age group. Methodological basis of the survey is the competence paradigm of social and cultural activity. The total number of standardized methodological approaches was 13 and authors' methodology was applied. The problem of inter-ethnic conflicts among students of Sumy region is relevant, though it does not reach the average national level (40% and 44% correspondingly). The essence of the multicultural competence as a component of social competence is clarified. The concept of "social competence" is revealed. The value-motivational block, cognitive block, activity-behavioral block are considered the main components of multicultural competence. The existence of a number of reasons of insufficient formation of the participants' multicultural competence is defined. The reasons are clarified and substantiated. According to the results of the research, the perspectives concerning solving the problem of insufficient level of Ukrainian students' multicultural competence (at three levels: legislative, scientific and methodical) are determined.

**Keywords:** multicultural competence, university, higher educational institution, students, prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts, globalization, ethno-religious context, international exchange.

### **1. Introduction**

Rapid processes of globalization, which power grew substantially in the early 21st century, on the one hand, caused the so-called "explosion of inter-ethnic conflicts", the further escalation of which is determined by one of the leading problems facing mankind at the present stage of its development. Thus, according to the European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), the year 2006 was marked by an increase in the number of racism in the countries of the European Union by 25%. On the other hand, progressive

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humanity has realized that it is non-violent existence and interaction that are called upon to become the resources of sustainable human development (The Global Goals for sustainable development, 2015).

In the conditions of rapid globalization, multi-structural inter-ethnic conflicts are becoming more and more open and explosive: they contain ethno-cultural, ethno-religious and ethno-social contexts. In the broadest sense, the inter-ethnic conflict, a kind of social conflict, is defined as a collision of the opposite needs and interests of two or more ethnic nations conditioned by the stages of socio-civilizational maturity. Inter-ethnic conflicts occur between individual representatives or social groups of various ethnic groups.

Currently, more than 130 peoples and nationalities live on the territory of modern Ukraine. On the other hand, the progress of the Ukrainian society towards the European community is reinforced by integration, i.e. migration processes. In particular, international contacts are expanding and the number of international exchanges is growing rapidly. Accordingly, in education, as in one of the most social institutions, these trends are also available. So, higher educational institutions in Ukraine are becoming multinational: foremost it is facilitated by the country's entry into the Bologna process, as well as certain intergovernmental agreements between Ukraine and other states on cooperation in the field of education. Thus, the number of expats in Ukraine, as of 01/01/2018, reached 64,066 people from 147 countries around the world (Ukrainian State Center for International Education, 2018). Compared to the total number of students of Ukrainian universities of III-VI accreditation levels, 1 330 000 people, the share of expats is currently 4.8% (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2018). In view of the above, the organization of the modern Ukrainian higher education system is transformed under the influence of the multicultural component of the educational process and, in turn, affects the relations between them. That is why the regulation in the context of modern transformational processes within the framework of a multicultural Ukrainian society is gaining importance, especially – the study and monitoring of inter-ethnic conflicts, the presence or absence of which ultimately determine the nature of relations between subjects of multicultural interaction and influence the behavior of the latter.

Ukraine, as a modern democratic state, has ratified a number of international documents related to the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts. They are:

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The United Nations, 1948);
- the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UN General Assembly, 1965);
- the Convention on Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation No. 111 (Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111, 1958);
- the Convention against Discrimination in education (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1960), etc.

At the same time, its own legislative framework for optimization of the indicated problem in Ukraine is being developed too slowly. In particular, the draft law “On the Concept of the State Ethno-National Policy of Ukraine” (Draft law “On the Concept of the State Ethno-National Policy of Ukraine”, 2013), which was brought before the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2013 and was supported by it, has not been adopted yet. Moreover, in our opinion, in the content of the legislative framework of the Ukrainian system of higher education there are certain inconsistencies with the modern concept of the open world. In particular, the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, in Art. 26.4 determines the concept of personality development as one of the leading tasks of higher education through patriotic, legal, ecological education, through assertion of moral values, social activity, civic attitude and responsibility, a healthy way of life, the ability to think freely and self-organize in modern

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conditions (the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, 2014). Thus, in the content of modern personality development, in the interpretation of this law, there is no structural allocation of such an essential component as multicultural education. Moreover, this term is non-existent throughout the text of the document. Moreover, Article 3 (the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, 2014) declares the principle of international integration and integration of the higher education system of Ukraine in the European Higher Education. T. Pohoda’s (2010) estimation of inter-ethnic relations that have developed in higher educational institutions of Kyiv, Ukraine in 2010 should be taking into account : “... the Ukrainian youth is not able to make a clear decision: almost half of the participants could not give a clear answer to the questions asked about conflicts and attitudes towards foreigners. Nevertheless, the situation, comparison with 2005, has changed for the better, and modern youth have become more interested in foreign culture, everyday life and in general the situation that is formed in other countries (Pohoda, 2010, p.102). The researcher identifies a set of leading factors that guide Ukrainian student youth with respect to expats: the rules of conduct of foreigners that are incompatible with the way of life of Ukrainians (82.2% of respondents), “terrorism” (69.1%), “foreigners are the carriers of diseases” (36.8%), competition in the labor market of students (26.4%), religious differences (24.1%) (Pohoda, 2010).

Unfortunately, for the time being, we do not find any further attempts of T. Pohoda to trace the dynamics of the problem, which was investigated previously. We do not find similar data in other contemporary scientific works, especially in statistical data. However, the analysis of the content of some Ukrainian sectoral documents sheds some light on the issue of the state of inter-ethnic conflicts among university students. In particular, the very title of the Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine dated 10/01/2013 No. 10, which is still in force, “On Improving Educational Work at Higher Medical (Pharmaceutical) Educational Institutions of the IV Level of Accreditation and Institutions of Postgraduate Education of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, Ensuring the Safety of Stay and Training of Foreign Citizens” is eloquent. The text of this document manifests proves problem of inter-ethnic conflicts in modern Ukrainian universities (Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine “On Improving Educational Work at Higher Medical (Pharmaceutical) Educational Institutions of the IV Level of Accreditation and Institutions of Postgraduate Education of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, Ensuring the Safety of Stay and Training of Foreign Citizens”, 2013).

Despite the reluctance to publicize the relevant conflicts, sharpened to the extent of hate crimes, the tragic results of their consequences have become open to the public. For example, the murder of two Indian students who studied at Uzhhorod National University happened in June, 2016. In June, September 2015 there took place the mass fights on campuses where foreign students of Kharkiv universities suffered. The student from Turkmenistan who studied at Kharkiv National University of Economics was killed. In August 2011 there was an arson at the hostel room in which students of Sumy State University from Nigeria lived, etc. We stand fully behind the point of view that patterns of violent hate crime can be an important indicator of fissures in society, and provide early warning where societies are lurching into social or ethnic conflict. (Preventing and responding to hate crimes: A resource guide for NGOs in the OSCE region, 2009). Opposite in the content of the above-mentioned T. Pohoda’s message, the thesis of the international collective of authors who investigated hate crimes in Ukraine during 2007-2009 concerning the rapid decrease in the tolerance of Ukrainian society (Schiffer, Katsbert, Rossman, 2010), strengthens our concern that the detected dangerous trend in Ukraine has not yet been stopped. In addition, according to independent experts of Kharkiv Human Rights Group, the Center for Legal and Political

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Studies “Duma”, the number of crimes motivated by racism and xenophobia in modern Ukraine is no less than 190 cases per year, and the index of the national distance of Ukrainians during the last fifteen years have grown from 4.4 (the desire for insularity) to 5.1 (the desire for isolation). Almost 44% of students from other countries studying at Ukrainian universities showed that they had suffered from ethically motivated persecution to some extent (Human Rights in Ukraine. Human Rights Organizations’ Report, 2012). It should be noted that the raised problem is not unique: long-standing foreign scientific studies confirm its relevance to other countries. In particular, John Nicoletti, Sally Spencer-Thomas, and Christofer Bolinger (2009) in their research work retrospectively analyze a series of violent acts in the student environment in the United States, among which ethnicity has a specific weight. Researchers substantiate ways to prevent and overcome this problem, and emphasize the need to take into account its viral nature, and therefore – early intervention. So, the combination of the analysis of the modern global and domestic social situation in the context under investigation and the modern scientific heritage devoted to the problem of diagnosis and prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts among students make possible to formulate the existing contradictions. These contradictions are: between the intensification of migration processes in Ukraine and the lack of readiness of the domestic community for effective social integration of migrants and expats in it; avant-garde social role of students as a generator of new social standards and a significant number of cases of violent inter-ethnic conflicts among students. This has actualized the task of monitoring the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts among students, as a community that must be the holder of progressive social values, on the experience of Sumy region (Sumy, Ukraine). The region selected for the pilot study is considered relevant to the research problem. After all, despite the fact that the Ukrainian top cities for training of foreign students are the cities of Kharkiv, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa and Vinnytsia, in the city of Sumy for the past five years there has also been a steady growth in the number of expats. The data are presented in the Table1.

Table 1

*Dynamics of the Number of Foreign Students in Sumy Higher Educational Institutions*

|                                   | Number of students/percentage from the total sample |           |            |            |            |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                   | 2013/2014   | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016  | 2016/2017  | 2017/2018  |
| Sumy State Pedagogical University | 25/0,5%   | 90/2,07%  | 81/2,04%   | 123/3,39%  | 205/5,39   |
| Sumy State University             | 299/2,5%  | 512/4,5%  | 968/6,6%   | 1284/8%    | 1335/8,4%  |
| Sumy National Agrarian University | 76/2%   | 150/4%    | 180/5,2%   | 211/6,5%   | 259/7,1%   |
| Total sample                      | 400/1,6%  | 752/3,52% | 1229/4,61% | 1618/5,96% | 1799/6,96% |

The relevant information on the national level is presented in Table 2.(State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2018). The comparative analysis of the Tables 1 and 2 shows that the percentage of foreign students during the last 3 years in Sumy exceeds the national average data. There exist perspectives concerning the further increase in the number of students in the universities of Ukraine. Taking into account this issue and the authors’ possibility of further research conducting at the Sumy Universities confirms the relevance of the choice concerning the region of the study.

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Table 2

*Dynamics of the Number and Share of Foreign Students of Ukrainian Universities of III-VI Accreditation Levels*

|                            | 2013/2014 | 2014/2015 | 2015 /2016 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Ukrainian students         | 1723000   | 1438000   | 1375200    | 1369400   | 1330000   |
| Foreign students           | 60480     | 69969     | 63172      | 63906     | 64066     |
| %Share of foreign students | 3.5       | 4,8       | 4,6        | 4,7       | 4,8       |

According to the above given facts and considerations, despite the importance of theoretical and analytical work on the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts among students there exists an interest in some issues. They are:

- how contemporary students perceive the value of inter-ethnic harmony;
- what assessments of the social situation in the inter-ethnic context do they provide;
- what is the level of multicultural competence of students of higher educational institutions. This level is assumed as factor of inter-ethnic conflicts prevention in the investigated environment.

The data obtained will be the basis for developing an effective concept for optimizing the educational and socio-educational work of universities in preventing inter-ethnic conflicts among students.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1 General characteristics

The aim of the research was:

- to point out the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students' perception of inter-ethnic harmony value and their assessment of social situation in the inter-ethnic context;
- identify the level of multicultural competence of students of higher educational institutions as a factor in the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts in the students' environment.

To obtain information concerning the factors influencing students' answers standardized and validated research tools were chosen (questionnaires, paper form). Participants submitted questionnaires with consent to the processing of data. All questionnaires were anonymous.

The cluster survey was conducted May 11-31, 2018.

### 2.2 Sample of research

To reach the first aim of the research and to conduct the first survey, we selected 382 participants among the students from Sumy State A.S. Makarenko Pedagogical University, Sumy State University, and Sumy National Agrarian University. In order to diagnose the level of multicultural competence (the second aim), we held an experiment with 400 students of the above mentioned universities.

The general capacity of the expats sample size in Ukraine – 64000 people, the indicator of admissible probability of the research (95%), and the indicator of the acceptable margin of error (5%) were assumed while making the calculation of the representative sample size. The quota sample was applied for the purpose of proportional representation in the

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students' sample from three universities of Sumy and representatives of various gender. First, while determining the proportion of each university sample, we took into account the percentage correlation among the number of foreign students in them (Sumy State Pedagogical University - 11% of 1,799 people = 42 people, Sumy State University - 74% of 1799 ppl = 283 people, Sumy National Agrarian University - 15% of 1799 ppl = 57 people). Secondly, in order to comply with the requirements for proportional representation in a sample of different genders, 42 foreign students of Sumy State Pedagogical University (22 male and 20 female participants) were interviewed. It corresponded to 52% of male students and 48% of female foreign students of this university. The number of representatives among the foreign students from other two universities was determined by means of the same procedure. Sumy State University - 161 ppl, 57% of male participants and 122 ppl, or 43% of female participants) and Sumy National Agrarian University (40 ppl. or 70 % of male participants and 17 ppl. or 30% of female participants).

For the second part of our survey we applied the principle of quota sampling for the representation of students from each of the three universities involved in the study. To determine the volume of the population sample, the Gallup International Association methodology was used. According to it, the number of 133,000 people - students of Ukrainian higher education institutions of III-IV accreditation levels is defined as "infinite value", and the sample for it is 400 people. Due to the lack of appropriate gender statistics data in universities, we encountered difficulties in complying with the proportional representation of different genders in this sample. The approximate proportional representation values of women and men in Ukraine for the age group of 18-25 (50% / 50%). As a result, the characteristic of the sample population is represented as follows: Sumy State Pedagogical University - 272 ppl. (136 female and 136 male participants), Sumy State University - 64 ppl. (32 female and 32 male participants), Sumy National Agrarian University - 64 ppl., (32 female and 32 participants).

At the same time, we note that the gender specification of the survey is not the subject of the conducted scientific research. Subsequently, based on the number of foreign university students and the above-mentioned quantitative indicators of the sample, the simple, random (probable) sample was done.

## 2.3 Methods

To achieve the formulated objectives, we used a set of research methods:

- theoretical: systematic analysis of scientific literature, legislative and statistical sources as well as bibliographic analysis of scientific works – in order to find out the degree of elaboration of the problem under study; comparison – with the purpose of relevant definition of the structure of multicultural competence; comparison of the results of our study with the results of other related scientific developments; classification – in order to distinguish the criteria, indicators and levels of students' multicultural competence; compilation and systematic breakdown – to determine the results of integrated monitoring and their interactions with the set of socio-pedagogical conditions of a higher educational establishment environment and factors of their creation / formation;
- empirical: (observation, questionnaires, interviews, retrospective analysis of their own teaching experience in higher educational institutions) – to clarify the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students' perception of the value of inter-ethnic harmony and their assessments of the social situation in the inter-ethnic context, and to study the levels of multicultural competence of students;

• statistical: a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the obtained data using student's criterion in order to substantiate the probability of the results obtained. Percentage indicators of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students' perception of the value of inter-ethnic harmony and their assessments of the social situation in the context of inter-ethnic interaction were chosen as units of measurement, as well as a four-stage scale for assessing the level of multicultural competence of students, namely zero, elementary, standard and optimum levels. A cluster short-term sociological study was used to carry out the first task – to clarify the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students' perception of the value of inter-ethnic harmony and their assessments of the social situation in the context of inter-ethnic interaction, the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts (including hate crimes), in particular, among students in Ukraine.

We have elaborated a special questionnaire to receive qualitative estimation of these criteria to carry out the second task. We emphasize that certain questions, somewhat different in their wording, were repeated in various questionnaires, and the total number of questionnaires was 13. The methods that we have used: “Multicultural Experiences Questionnaire” (Aytug, 2013); “Test of the general level of friendship” by V. Ryakhovsky, M. Rokych's method “The hierarchy of value orientations”. “Methodology of diagnosing communicative objectives” by V. Boyko, “Diagnosis of motivational orientation in interpersonal communication” by I. Ladanov, V. Urazaeva (Fetiskin, Kozlov, Manuilov, 2002); “Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale” method by A. Mehrabian and M. Epstein (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972); “Ethnic identity types (EI)” survey, developed by G. Soldatova and S. Ryzhova (Drobizheva, 2003); “Cultural value orientations” test by J. Townsend, adapted by L. Pochebut (Sonin, 2004). We developed and used our own diagnostic methods – written questionnaires: “Student attitudes toward the study of foreign languages in the context of multicultural dialogue”, “Multicultural awareness of an individual”, “Personal attitude to the culture of other countries”, “Respondents' attitude to foreign students”, “Skills and experience of students' intercultural communication”.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 The evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students' perception of inter-ethnic harmony value and their assessment of social situation in the inter-ethnic context

The results of the survey give an opportunity to define how important the value of inter-ethnic harmony in the context of social progress is. 82% of participants attached much importance to it, 15% – defined it as not to be very significant and 3% could not give the answer to the question. We consider it expedient to note the absence of the answers that fixed the low importance of inter-ethnic harmony as a social value. This testifies to the high overall civil responsibility of participants in the context of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence (Table 3).

The distribution of participants' answers to the question “How acute is the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts (hate crimes in particular) among students in modern Ukraine?” is shown in the table (Table 3 ).

Table 3

*Distribution of participants' answers to the questions*

| Questions | Yes | No | Difficult to answer |
|-----------|-----|----|---------------------|
|-----------|-----|----|---------------------|



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|  |    |    |    |
|--|----|----|----|
| % How important is the value of inter-ethnic harmony in the context of social progress?                            | 82 | 15 | 3  |
| % How acute is the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts (hate crimes in particular) among students in modern Ukraine? | 36 | 34 | 30 |
| % Controllability / non-control of the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts among students.                           | 27 | 38 | 35 |
| % Have you personally experienced inter-ethnic conflicts among students?   | 18 | 60 | 22 |
| % Does your university undertake qualitative prevention activities of inter-ethnic conflicts among students?       | 15 | 35 | 46 |

36% of participants chose the “acute” option, which indicates a low level of awareness and concern of students about this problem. 34% of the total number of participants chose “not acute”; 30% of the respondents chose the option “difficult to answer”. Thus, we draw an interim conclusion: that the situation of inter-ethnic conflicts among students is not clearly perceived by the consciousness of the social group that was chosen for interviewing. There were the attempts to find out the student's perception of the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts in their environment. The situation should be defined as controlled or uncontrolled. (Table 3). 27% of participants chose the answer that “situation is controlled”. It is less than one third of participants who are confident in the stability of the social situation in the investigated area.

They recognize the measures to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts among student youth as effective ones. It is appropriate to justify the historical experience of peaceful coexistence of different nationalities in Sumy region. Historically, it is not a region of the of extremist movements existence. 35% of participants chose “difficult to answer”, which indicates lack of knowledge of students in this field and substantiates the relevance of educational and preventive work in this direction. 38% of participants chose the second answer, indicating a high degree of distrust and disappointment. They are not sure in the ability of state institutions to manage the social dynamics of inter-ethnic conflicts in higher educational establishments.

The availability of direct personal experience of participants in the context of the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts among students is also the question for the survey. The corresponding question was formulated as follows: “Have you personally experienced inter-ethnic conflicts among students?” The obtained data indicate that there are no participants, who would have ever experienced facing the situations of ethnic conflicts in the student environment. At the same time, 18% of the respondents chose the option “yes”. Such a result confirms the thesis of inter-ethnic conflicts existence in the student environment within the Sumy region, although they do not reach the national average (44%). Lack of experience of ethnic conflicts among students was noted by 60% of participants. 22% of participants found it difficult to give a definite answer about their personal experience of observing / participating the inter-ethnic conflicts among the students. The situation may be caused by the reluctance of the participants to widespread the information about negative facts concerning the phenomenon of the problem, which is studied. Prevention is one of the leading methods of combating inter-ethnic conflicts among students. Accordingly, the participants' opinion on the quality of prevention activities in general is of great concern. While answering the question “Does your university undertake qualitative prevention measures concerning the inter-ethnic conflicts among students?” the largest number of participants (35%) provided a negative qualitative characteristic to this process. 46% of participants failed to assess the quality and 15% of participants agreed with the assertion that such measures can be considered qualitative. (Table 3).

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## **3.2 Multicultural competence as a means of inter-ethnic conflicts prevention in the students' environment**

According to the data of the sociological research "Xenophobia in the context of multi-ethnic nature of Ukrainian society" (Kobzin, Sheiko, Martynenko & Belousov, 2008), the leading cause of xenophobic attitudes is ignorance, or at least a distorted perception of the representatives of other ethnic groups. Thus, from the standpoint of the leading competence paradigm of modern socio-cultural processes and taking to the account the above mentioned sociological research, we define multicultural competence as a means of preventing inter-ethnic conflicts in the student environment.

Let us demonstrate the logic of the impact of ignorance by means of focus group materials consisting of representatives of national minorities represented in this sociological study: "They do not know us, they do not know our culture, and they do not know the way of our life. They think of us stereotypically, according to the cliché. Just say to an ordinary Ukrainian "Pakistan", and you will get only negative feedback about the country. Because there is nothing good and positive about Pakistan in the media. Or say "Africa"? Fighting, AIDS, poverty, many bananas, animals ... I noticed that those Ukrainians who have traveled abroad are more open, and more easily contact foreigners. And those local, who have never left Ukraine, and especially those who live in the province, they are very dangerous" (Kobzin, Sheiko, Martynenko, Belousov, 2008).

### **3.2.1 The concept of multicultural competence**

To achieve the second objective of our research, namely identifying the level of multicultural competence of students of higher educational institutions as a factor in the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts in the investigated environment, we first had to determine the initial interpretation of the concept of "multicultural competence" and its structure.

Foremost, a number of modern scientists prove the fundamental importance in the content of "multicultural competence" concept of the subject's ability to conduct a productive dialogue with representatives of other cultures. Foreign researchers define multicultural competence in the context of two interrelated approaches, namely cultural identity – values, beliefs, attitudes, and communication channels – language, nonverbal communication (Intercultural Competences, 2013). They define culture as, first of all, a message. T. Semyhinivska determines statements based on the laws of a certain language and lexical material, sets of statements semantically and pragmatically related to each other (texts of various kinds), and the reality to which they appeal (Semyhinivska, 2007). O. Kondratieva interprets words as conceptual tools for representing the experience of a particular society (Kondratieva, 2017).

The multicultural competence is incorrectly limited only by the context of the linguistic integration of the personality into another culture. We suggest broader interpretation of this concept: as a condition for effective communication of a person in a multicultural space. Therefore, the multicultural competence is considered as a component of social competence – a comprehensive personal quality based on tolerance and manifested in the ability to carry out an effective dialogical interaction with representatives from a different culture or ethnic background.

### **3.2.2 The structure of multicultural competence**

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In accordance with the outlined essence of multicultural competence in agreement with the activity paradigm, it seems logical to present the structure of the multicultural competence of an individual as interaction of:

- value-motivational block – value focus (mindset) on: cognition of foreign languages and other ethnic cultures as compulsory in terms of non-violent communication with representatives of other ethnic groups (tolerant, peaceful interaction with representatives from a different culture, each of which is unique and valuable to the entire world community);
- cognitive block – processing of information in the form of a system / body of knowledge about the cultural-historical and social experience of different ethnic groups and the role of multicultural inter-ethnic dialogue in the context of social progress;
- activity-behavioral block – ability to effectively perform the tasks of activities when interacting with representatives of different ethnic groups on the basis of inter-ethnic tolerance, absence of xenophobic manifestations in behavior.

We understand the functional essence of multicultural competence as: the condition of peaceful coexistence and interaction of representatives from a different culture or ethnic background; a means and an incentive for the development and mutual development of various ethnic cultures; a common spiritual denominator for communication of original ethnic cultures.

Depending on the subject of multicultural competence, the competences should be singled out: individual multicultural competence, group multicultural competence, multicultural competence of a particular society.

There are greater possibilities of modern scientific theory and practice regarding the study of the multicultural competence at the individual level. It determines the identification process (the leading psychological mechanism of socialization) and the development of identity (the presence of certain cultural features that allow people to be singled out among themselves both as individuals and representatives of various ethnic cultures).

Being a type of social competence, multicultural competence, in the context of inter-ethnic conflicts prevention, is actualized in the context of cultural ties and can be measured as an integrative personal quality that allows a person to solve the problem of constructive (mutually acceptable) and effective interaction with representatives from a different culture or ethnic background.

Taking into account the fact that the criteria of the investigated phenomenon can be characterized through classification means and simultaneously should reflect the higher level of the investigated phenomenon (we consider multicultural competence as the result of a three-level impact), we find it possible to single out the following criteria of multicultural competence: value-motivational, cognitive, activity-behavioral. The system of criteria and indicators of the development of students' multicultural competence is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Criteria and Indicators of Students' Multicultural Competence Level in the Context of Inter-ethnic Conflicts Prevention*

| The criteria | List of relevant indicators |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
|--------------|-----------------------------|

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|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Value-motivational  | <p>Readiness to focus attention on other people's problems: emotional sensitivity; ability to show empathy.</p> <p>General tolerance: negative perception of cases of hostility towards representatives of other ethnic groups, awareness and recognition of destructive facts of discriminatory means against representatives of other ethnic groups, constructive and valuable attitude towards representatives of other ethnic groups.</p> <p>Communicative tolerance: acceptance or understanding of a person's identity, ability to hide / inhibit / soften unpleasant feelings in situations of interaction with non-communicable people, zero tolerance for another person's physical or mental discomfort, readiness to adapt to other people.</p> <p>Recognition of the principle of multilingualism as a means of achieving an "open world".</p> |
| Cognitive           | <p>Assimilation of models, values and traditions of world culture, including various ethnic groups: knowledge of foreign languages, understanding of the phenomenon of ethnic culture, its types and varieties, awareness of the cultural diversity of the world, understanding of the essence and social role of multicultural competence, awareness of the leading trends in globalization processes, awareness of leading methods of preventing interethnic conflicts, factors of their occurrence and a set of their negative consequences.</p>  |
| Activity-behavioral | <p>Ability to solve tasks of productive interaction with representatives of other ethnic cultures: ability to plan and maintain interaction within the requirements of nonviolent behavior, ability to analyze the problem in a multifaceted way taking into account the partner's ethnic experience, ability to reasonably select criteria for evaluating options for interaction methods, ability to adjust the tactics of their own behavior in accordance with changing characteristics in the situation of interaction with representatives of various ethnic groups.</p>   |

## 3.3 The evaluation of students' multicultural competence level

### 3.3.1 General characteristics of levels

To determine the level of students' multicultural competence, we singled out the appropriate levels: zero, elementary, standard, optimum. The characteristics of these levels, which are given below, are relative and do not claim to be unique, both in terms of the integrity of the investigated quality (multicultural competence), and in view of the complexity of its certain components diagnosis.

The optimum level of students' multicultural competence is a high cultural level based on systematic, profound knowledge, relevant professional skills. The student shows a vivid desire to acquire multicultural competence, a steady interest in studying different (certain, especially – neighboring) ethnic cultures that goes beyond the relevant curricula. He

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characterizes ethnic differences in terms of value assessment, makes active and systematic attempts to apply his multicultural knowledge and skills in various spheres of social interaction, promotes the values of non-violent inter-ethnic interaction (in this case, by means of activities in the public sector, for example as a volunteer). He realizes all the probable consequences of inter-ethnic interaction (both positive and negative). The student has a good command of multicultural vocabulary, freely points to relevant facts and statistics, knows several foreign languages (one of them – at a high level), has techniques, methods and technologies for establishing peaceful inter-ethnic interaction, reducing stress in the specified communication process (in this case by means of mediation). He demonstrates respect for the views of representatives of other ethnic cultures, seeks to objectively assess his own values, multicultural potential and formulate appropriate tasks of self-development / self-improvement.

The standard level of students' multicultural competence is characterized by the presence of a personal interest in the study of ethnic culture but with a significant advantage in favor of the development of their own ethnic group; shows a positive attitude towards representatives of other cultures; demonstrates sustainable motivation for mastering information and operational principles of the multicultural direction interaction. At the same time, the level of relevant knowledge and skills is still defined as insufficiently integrated, which is observed in the tendency to use typical (partly template) forms and methods of multicultural interaction. Incomplete knowledge of the thematic terminology is determined; however, there is recognition of the benefits of non-violent communication ethics between representatives of various ethnic groups as well as the organic nature of the moral aspect of any interaction. The student is aware of the popular sources of obtaining various types of support for the development of his own multicultural competence or consultative (intermediary) assistance to representatives from a different culture. He knows one foreign language at a level sufficient for productive personal and professional communication; he demonstrates selective activity in multicultural activities. Besides, he is able to model interaction in a multicultural environment, but is having trouble in the necessity of its mobile modification taking into account new situational circumstances. He shows attempts to self-examine interactions in the process of multicultural interaction, but for their integrity, needs advisory assistance. The student is characterized by selective communication with representatives of various ethnic groups; has a strong desire for personal self-improvement, in the process of which he includes the development of multicultural competence.

The elementary level of students' multicultural competence is inherent to a personality who shows scattered knowledge (in the sphere of basic knowledge and leading terminology) and a partial ability to master the skills of multicultural competence. It is also characterized by a selective interest in the development of own ethnic and another ethnic culture, which is conditioned by external influences (curriculum necessity, etc.). The student fails to holistically model acts of implementation, and especially – forming up his own interaction with representatives of other ethnic cultures; he is characterized by unstable motives for mastering information of a multicultural direction and also by a variety of ways of operating this information. As a rule, he creates multicultural interaction according to the model, with the lack of his own initiative; he speaks only one foreign language at the elementary level; he experiences difficulties interacting with representatives from a different culture or ethnic background. This level is characterized by formal awareness of the need to develop a space of non-violent interaction of representatives of various ethnic groups; own multicultural competence is not recognized as an integral part of social competence; is characterized by

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situational manifestations of tolerance, empathy and lack of aspiration for self-improvement in the diagnosed aspect.

The zero level of students' multicultural competence is inherent to a personality who does not show aspiration to master own ethnic heritage and get acquainted with the cultural heritage of other ethnic groups; is characterized by a negative attitude towards the representatives of other ethnic groups. The student shows lack of theoretical ethnological knowledge (including the content of multicultural terminology) and practical achievements both in the context of his own culture and in the context of other cultures. He does not speak any foreign language. He is characterized by lack of initiative and a tendency to sabotage participation in activities of multicultural orientation, avoids dialogues and contacts in this sphere of communication. He denies multicultural competence as a necessary component of social competence; does not consider it expedient to find ways to achieve mutual understanding with representatives of other ethnic groups; does not know the range of ethno-social problems of the region in which it lives. At this level, inter-ethnic tolerance is absent, that can result in manifestations of aggressive, as well as violent behavior. It denies the need for personal development on the path to improving multicultural competence.

As a result, the characteristics of the levels of multicultural competence provided, we note that they are interdependent and may have intermediate positions.

### **3.3.2 Diagnosis of the level of students' multicultural competence**

Diagnosis of both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of each component in the structure of students' multicultural competence was intended to ensure greater objectivity of the experimental data obtained.

We present a versatile determination to the level of formation of such personality characteristic features as: ethnic tolerance, empathy, ability to objectify the evaluation of multicultural phenomena, the existence of worldviews on spiritual and value orientations, awareness of the importance of an active social position. They serve as a basis for the formation of the essence of culture, self-training of readiness for the implementation of a new form of relationship and formation of a multicultural personality.

To solve a number of the above-mentioned experimental problems, we carried out a set of corresponding diagnostic activities. Paying attention to the fact that many diagnostic tasks related to the interpretation of the content of core concepts in the context of multicultural competence of an individual, we deliberately used those that are the most widespread, common and paradigmatic and avoided unnecessary discussions on their excessive detailing. We interpreted tolerance based on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance of the United Nations: "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace" (Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, 1995).

Besides, the experiment of diagnostic methodology sought to identify:

- the extent to which students understand the content and structure of the term "multicultural competence";
- tendencies in the students' attitude towards the problem of multicultural competence formation and understanding of its importance for social development;

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- the level of tolerance, empathy and the value-motivational characteristics close to them;
- the degree of students' activity in the context of their multicultural interaction, improvement of skills and abilities of non-violent intercultural dialogue.

To determine the availability and the level of participants' interest in the culture of other ethnic groups, as well as their attitude to the study of foreign languages as indicators of the value-motivational criterion of multicultural competence, we applied the diagnostic methodology of unfinished sentences. It is intended to encourage and take cooperative approach towards the characteristics of the hierarchy of humanity moral standards and values that are the key to preserving one's own identity, adequate self-identification with spiritual heritage of a certain ethnic community, assimilation of civilizational and innovative values of multilingualism without loss of personal features.

Among the most widespread answers concerning the factors of respondents' interest and curiosity in the cultural heritage of other ethnic groups, we should note the following: "a means to learn more about this nation / this ethnos / these people" (40%). While studying the participants' attitude to foreign languages, the significant predominance of the function of professional implementation is defined. The most popular answers were: "a means to get a better-paid job" (60%) and "a means to find work abroad" (21%), and only 9% of the respondents said that mastering a foreign language is a means to learn the world diversity.

In the context of subjective and social importance of multicultural competence, we note that the majority of participants (60%) formulated a statement such as "multicultural competence contributes to the normalization of interpersonal relations and national conflicts". However, some of the answers (10%) on this issue can be characterized as negative ones.

To determine the interest of students in the culture of other ethnic groups and to identify their motivation to learn cultural peculiarities, we used a ranking method. Participants were offered to determine their attitude to the culture of a foreign country on a scale, graded from -1 to +3. Students who chose 0 were classified according to the zero level, +1 – to the elementary one. To the standard level, we included students who chose +2, and whose choice was +3 – to the optimum level. The following data have become unexpected: the participants' insignificant interest in the specifics of foreign countries culture (8%), as well as their interest in the features and norms of intercultural behavior (48%). The intercultural communication is a component of social (life-long) competence (45%) for the minority of the participants. At the same time, 24% of respondents noted that it was not relevant enough for their success in life. The vast majority of respondents did not understand the importance of empathy and tolerance (12%). However, a significant majority of participants in our experiment identified phenomena of xenophobia and racism as negative (88%).

At the same time, responding to a block of questions concerning the impact of globalization processes on society, students (40%) recognize the urgent task of educating a citizen on the ideas of humanism, tolerance, justice and democracy. They emphasize that higher education institutions should be given a special role in the specified context, for bringing up the generation with a tolerant outlook capable of productive non-violent intercultural dialogue, including inter-ethnic.

The small part of participants (7%) read additional literature on the achievements of other ethnic groups and participate in the discussion of cultural traditions, and only 5% of respondents make efforts to determine the common features and differences between their own and other ethnic groups.

The obtained results of the written questionnaire disclose conclusions regarding the level of the cognitive criterion of students' multicultural competence. In order to objectify the

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diagnostic results, we used the set of questions to obtain comparative data on identical information clusters. They determine the level of the cognitive criterion of respondents' multicultural competence in terms of key indicators: understanding the phenomenon of culture, ethno-culture, world culture, culture of non-violent interaction, technologies for the implementation of interaction with representatives of other cultures on the principles of tolerance, empathy, sharing, etc.

We included the question of the respondents' interpretation of the concept of "multicultural competence" as a core element in our study. All participants of the experiment received a corresponding written assignment. Analysis of the results of its accomplishment gave us the opportunity to identify the most typical: "the level of ethnic culture development of an individual" (23% of responses), "the result of training a person at a higher educational establishment" (20%), "a means of avoiding inter-ethnic conflicts" (16%). Thus, a significant part of the respondents was not able to distinguish ethnos from the nation, culture from competence. So, limited general cultural level that "suffers" because of students' major attention to professional disciplines becomes an obstacle to their active socialization in the context of competent inter-ethnic communication.

The majority of the participants (over 93%) failed to mention the names of the people who conduct scientific research in the field of multicultural competence. A significant number of them (76%) identified multicultural, ethno-cultural and professional competence. As a tendency, the majority of the participants (80%) failed to determine the content of the category "multicultural competence" in an appropriate way. Besides, there is high percentage (20%) of those who did not give any possible answer to this question. While processing of the results obtained, it turned out that the same majority of students (80%) do not like or cannot answer the arguments-requiring questions. However, the most difficult tasks for the participants of the experiment were: 1) formulation of the essence of tolerance (16% of correct answers); 2) definition of the dialectic of the concepts "multicultural competence" and "multicultural competency" (9% of correct answers).

The results obtained while diagnosing the level of multicultural competence according to the activity-behavioral criterion have revealed that a small number of respondents demonstrated the capacity for manifestations of tolerance and empathy. A small share of students (8%) pay significant attention to the development of their foreign language competence and make efforts to do so outside the educational process at the university, while 38% of respondents have a good ("good" and "excellent" marks) command of a foreign language.

Everything mentioned above in combination with low community involvement of students, poor communicative characteristics with tendencies to use aggressive and manipulative communicative techniques, testifies to the fact that the majority of respondents are characterized by the elementary level of intercultural communication skills. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the participants in the diagnostic experiment demonstrates the ability to engage in inter-ethnic dialogue at the elementary level: fragmentary knowledge and typical (template) skills do not allow respondents to reach a productive level of holistic modeling, management and self-analysis of multicultural communication process. Interaction of the majority of respondents, in the investigated plane, is usually spontaneous, haphazard, or patterned.

Processing, interpretation and analysis of the data obtained from the complex questionnaire showed the majority of respondents' passive attitude towards inter-ethnic communication with representatives of other nationalities, accompanied by insufficient attention to communicative partners and lack of empathy. The students' answers demonstrate



the lack of tolerance for cultural differences. Respondents mostly do not care about the requirements of a holistic perception of the cultural identity of national cultural features, the need for modeling / monitoring / self-analysis of the process of implementing inter-ethnic interactions. Unfortunately, the students' answers as far as the degree of their interest in foreign language culture is concerned contain confirmation of a slight interest in studying cultural differences: other cultures are unknown to students and they show no desire to learn their cultural principles and features.

The qualitative level of indicators of the activity-behavioral criterion of multicultural competence is so low, in comparison with other criteria of multicultural competence, due to the lack of appropriate practice. The limited scope of practice, on the one hand, is the factor of formation, and on the other – the result of the elementary level of the activity-behavioral criterion of multicultural competence inherent to the majority of participants in the study. This necessitates special attention to creating conditions for the weakening of this destructive factor, including the means of increasing motivation towards studying foreign languages at the university. This necessity was incorporated in the further scientific research and in the development of methodological recommendations on optimizing the process of ethnic conflicts prevention among students. The complex of experimental data obtained confirms the formation of the elementary level of multicultural competence among the students involved in the study. This characteristic only determines the general tendency of the investigated process. In order to avoid distortion of diagnostic data in the process of determining the generalized (“average”) level of multicultural competence development as an integrated structure, we present the obtained qualitative and quantitative data in accordance with the concept of an integrative approach distributed according to each of the above mentioned criteria of multicultural competence: value-motivational , cognitive, activity-behavioral (Table 5).

Table 5

*Results of Diagnosis of Students*

*Multicultural Competence Formation According to the Criteria*

|                   | Value-motivational<br>criterion | Cognitive criterion | Activity-behavioral<br>criterion |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| %Optimum level    | 0                               | 0                   | 0                                |
| %Standard level   | 40                              | 30                  | 12                               |
| %Elementary level | 57                              | 70                  | 85                               |
| %Zero level       | 3                               | 0                   | 3                                |

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of the results of our diagnostics has shown the relevance of the problem of students' multicultural competence formation in the context of the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts. It revealed the leading reasons for its insufficient formation among respondents. They are: lack of inter-ethnic communication / inter-ethnic interaction practice; respondents' vague perceptions of the essence and social functions of multicultural competence; lack of a holistic state approach to the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts. As a consequence there is a lack of special attention at higher education institutions to the issue of multicultural competence formation; insufficient development of forms and experience of socio-educational and academic work on prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts.

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Essential analysis of the diagnostic data of the survey confirms the need to optimize the academic and social-educational work of universities on prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts among students. Prospects for optimizing the problem of insufficient level of multicultural competence of university students in Ukraine should be fulfilled at three levels. Legislative level – the task of multicultural education is one of the core tasks of the university education of Ukraine (Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”). Scientific and research level – intensification of the study of various aspects of the students’ multicultural competence problem. Methodical – the development and implementation of targeted programs to improve the social, educational and academic work of universities in the context under study, with special attention to the formation of linguistic (foreign language) competence as the leading means of optimizing the students’ multicultural competence.

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