

EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROBLEMS OF THE LINGUISTIC EDUCATION

Anna Ikonnikova

M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (RUSSIA)
ayelovskaya@mail.ru

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ABSTRACT

In this article the notion Innovative Education as the factor of modern Economy, the ways to involve employers into the process of external evaluation, the experience of European partner universities in the part of knowledge and skills evaluation in terms of competence based approach, university environment as social and cultural platform for the formation and development of general and professional competences are considered. Some questions of cross-cultural competence as the result of cross-cultural socialization of students in the process of linguistic education and its evaluation are discussed.

Key words: language education, Innovative Education, intercultural communication, intercultural competence, socialization, self-development, socio-cultural environment, competence-based approach

1. INTRODUCTION

On the basis of the thesis that fundament of new Knowledge Economy is Innovative Education, considered now as the perspective of modern Russian educational system, close attention is to be paid to purposeful innovative education of the students. The results of this approach is the development of creativity, formation of self learning skills, which allow the student to gain new knowledge and experience for operating in the society of knowledge.

The basic characteristics of Innovative Education are: the development of creativity of the students, self learning skills development, self-improvement, self education system development, self organization skills development, as well as the development of ability to plan his/her professional activity and see ahead the impact of decisions made.

One of the key issues in education nowadays is the idea of a competence-based approach to education. Therefore, the main problem of the educational system reform is the creation of a "competence-based graduate model", which presuppose an integrated complex of envisioned learning outcomes as a result of studying in an institution of higher education and whose foundational principle is the notion of "competence". O. Dyachkin and O. Okolelov admit that actual competence (a concrete learning outcome) does not directly and automatically follow education as its product, but is rather a result of self-development and self-realization of the person in the process of education, as well as the consequence of integration and generalization of all of his/her experiences associated with that process(5). In this case this integrated vision includes not only a gnostic component (knowledge), but also the necessity of developing self-awareness, as a determining factor of a graduate's responsibility to him-/herself, society, and becoming a contributing citizen.

Parenting and development are some of the main goals of education as stated in the normative documents used to organize the educational process at the level of secondary education. In her article "Key Competences as a New Paradigm of Educational Result" I.A. Zimnyaya distinguishes personal competences from a life-related competences (6). The latter includes health-protecting competences (knowing and following a healthy life style); competences for understanding common values (values of existence, life, culture); and civil competences (knowing and following societal rules and fulfilling one's citizenary obligations). Personal development is integral to success and satisfaction both during and after university. It holds enduring values extending beyond university and is beneficial to a student's lifelong development and quality of life.

However, even if educational goals have been formed the problem with the achievement of these goals from the point of view of its effectiveness evaluation and quality assessment is still unsolved. It is to be considered as one of the most urgent questions as the new generation of students are professionally trained in competence based approach and on the basis of new standards, implemented in 2011. There is still disaccord between standards requirements in terms of competence formation and its level evaluation.

The formation of personal qualities temporally extends well beyond the educational time-frame set by an institution and it therefore can determine the future success of a prospective graduate. In light of the aforementioned, we suggest that the most significant way of developing a human being as a complicated and

integrated system is by means of an educational process which emphasizes the development of self-awareness. The main benefit of such development lies in the fact that a person, being free in his choice of ways of personal development, can independently initiate his/her own positive qualities and achieve personal growth through self-awareness and self-education. The criteria of self-development are closely connected with the main goals of education: intellectual tolerance referring to the state of an "open mind" (i.e. openness to new ideas and intellectual curiosity), the desire for personal growth and development, the ability to cope with difficulties, appreciation of intellectual and cultural diversity, respect for and willingness to cooperate with others, including persons of different cultural backgrounds, ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity, ability to effectively resolve conflicts and a capacity for empathy and thoughtfulness.

The process of learning and training at University coincides, as the rule, the period of students' personality growth, deep moral qualities formation, development and improvement of students' professional skills. In these terms Higher Educational establishment or University is the social environment which influences his/her development. Thus, University's socio cultural environment can be determined as special continuum in which knowledge and social, intercultural experience are deflected, the latest is implemented thanks to cooperation, communication and co-creativity. University social environment is a construction kit, which qualitatively characterizes socio cultural atmosphere of the educational establishment and discloses its social and cultural organigram of norms and values, which are proceeded in all its elements: curriculum, programs, study books and faculty activities.

2. RESULTS

In our research the educational activity of students is the basis of their future personal lives and of their professional and personal statuses. We believe that within this research framework, for the students of language departments, the formation of the intercultural competence as a product of self-development in the process of education is of primary importance. A competence-based approach to education is the means to well-rounded growth of the whole person through the cultivation not only of the intellect, but of practical skills, as well as the competences related to the moral, emotional, social and aesthetic aspects of the personality.

The student community represents the most active, mobile and dynamic part of the youth. The period of education in university is the period of formation of moral, axiological and professional qualities. During this time the socio-cultural environment of an educational establishment is the leading factor in students' self-development. It is the period of formation and realization of the basic social, political and cultural needs and interests. Also, it is the period of the acquisition of the much needed qualities for finding one's place within the system of social relations and for the execution of a certain social role. For a student the process of education is therefore the process of socialization. Viewed from this perspective, the socio-cultural environment of an educational establishment is a continuum of knowledge and cultural experience which intertwine through interaction, communication and co-creativity.

The socio-cultural environment of a higher education establishment is generated by many different components including the curriculum, educational programmes, textbooks and teachers' activities. It should therefore be ready to provide its students with all the opportunities for acquiring and implementing intercultural competence. Today's labor market demands that higher education institutions produce culturally competent individuals capable of thriving in today's culturally diverse environments. Employers underscore the need for university-educated employees to possess interpersonal skills that will enable them to effectively respond to conflict and to productively work in small groups with people from different backgrounds and cultures.

In the field of language pedagogy intercultural competence is considered to be a part of general cultural competence. In the opinion of the German culturologist G. Auernheimer, the formation of intercultural competence must first of all begin with directed self-analysis and critical self-reflection. There should first be readiness on the part of an individual to admit that cultural differences among people are real which can later develop into the capability for intercultural understanding and dialogue (3).

From the point of view of language education self-development is nothing other than the formation of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is a set of skills and knowledge learned and developed through experiential contact with new cultures. It is important to note that knowledge of other cultures is not enough to constitute intercultural competence. Intercultural competence also involves the development of skills and attitudes for successfully interacting with persons of diverse cultural backgrounds.

The model of intercultural competence formation includes three components: motivational, info-theoretical and practical activity-based phases. acting levels. It presupposes the integration of sociocultural, aesthetic, communicative, psychological and linguo-cultural forms of knowledge, as well as the presence of intercultural experience of interaction not only in learning situations in the process of language learning, but also in situations with real intercultural interaction.

Intercultural competence consists of three main components: 1) the affective component (attitudes); 2) the cognitive component (knowledge); and 3) the behavioral component (skills). It is the aim of institutions of higher education, through their internationalization efforts and educational programs, to produce graduates who are interculturally competent in these three specific areas. Intercultural competence is based on the knowledge of at least one foreign language, psychology, communication skills including professional communication, team building ability, cooperative skills, competitive skills, ability to work in a multicultural environment, desire to increase one's knowledge, ability to compose one's thoughts and to reproduce one's ideas in speech. The socio-cultural environments of educational institutions is associated with the need to acquire such qualities as: independence, self-control, personal leadership and creativity. It also promotes «contextual behavior» in

appropriate university conditions and therefore, the responsibility of the university is to create such conditions. Life circumstances, on the other hand, may be different; some students may have the opportunity to go abroad, while for others such opportunities are beyond reach. Nevertheless, a university should maintain an overall level of requirements with respect to the quality of all its graduates.

New studies have examined more specifically the elements of study-abroad programs that best promote the development of intercultural competence (2). Program characteristics such as duration, location, student housing, teaching context, curricular intervention and mentoring may promote or inhibit intercultural development. In addition to program elements, a student's background characteristics, motivations and capacities also influence student outcomes. Student characteristics such as previous exposure to other cultures, gender, second-language ability and university major all contribute to student learning and development within the context of real intercultural interaction.

Within a context of formal language education the development of intercultural competence is considered to be part of general professional development. To ascertain the level of knowledge of intercultural competence among the students in our language we conducted a survey. The results of the survey for the students who have not studied abroad showed that they understood cultural competence as: a) the ability to establish contact with the representatives of other cultures — 39%; b) respect for individuality — 32,2 %; c) tolerance of diverse opinions — 30%; d) ability to overcome conflict situations — 30,1%; e) understanding of other culture's uniqueness — 28%; f) ability to empathize with others — 27%; g) appreciation of other culture's traditions — 20%; h) respect for other culture's religious values and rituals — 17%; i) ability to communicate with the representatives of other cultures — 16%; j) ability to use tact — 14%; k) ability to orient in other cultures — 8%; l) ability to successfully adapt to the conditions in other countries — 5%.

For the group of students who have had experiences studying abroad the results were quite different: a) ability to establish contact with the representatives of other cultures - 32%; b) respect for individuality — 32,2 %; c) tolerance of diverse opinions — 30%; d) ability to overcome conflict situations — 21%; e) appreciation of other culture's uniqueness — 22%; f) ability to empathize with others — 22%; g) appreciation of other culture's traditions - 17%; h) respect for other culture's religious values and rituals — 17%; i) ability to communicate with the representatives of other cultures — 21%; j) ability to use tact — 22%; k) ability to orient in other cultures — 14%; l) ability to successfully adapt to the conditions in other countries — 12%.

As can be seen from the results of the two groups of students, the theoretical understanding of intercultural competence differs significantly from that gained during an actual intercultural experience while living in another country.

3. CONCLUSION

The socio-cultural context of an educational institution is the integrative factor of a student's personal development influenced through the inclusion of the student into the institution's various spheres of activity. This is the space for joint activity of the students, professors and the teaching staff. The structure of this environment is determined by the peculiarities of the educational Institution, the norms and values of the culture, means of cultural self-realisation and personal resources. A process of education presents opportunities for professional self-determination as a result of broadening one's knowledge.

4. DISCUSSION

Summing up the aforesaid, some steps done in the field of professional competence evaluation, but competence level evaluation has not been worked out enough. The following system credibility gap prevents this:

- Lack of evaluation and methods procedure tools, corresponding to modern standards requirements for students' final attestation (in all the fields of professional education and particular linguistic);
- Not enough monitoring researches of Higher education quality assessment;
- The questions of quality assessment models and principals are not discussed at Universities on regular basis;
- The practice of long-term educational goals achievement evaluation is not developed;
- Quality requirements and goals formulations in terms of civil competences are formed in a way difficult to assess the final results;
- When quality assessed and competence level evaluated the best experience of foreign universities is not studied enough, though the experience of European partner universities' experience is conducted as every year the number of double diploma programs enlarges. The result of teaching cooperation and competence formation is to be evaluated.

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