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## Attitudes and Tolerance in the Structure of Individual Readiness for Intercultural Interaction

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### Abstract

Today, multicultural society feels the necessity of a new worldview aimed at integration of cultures and nations for further convergence and spiritual enrichment. All this actualizes the importance of multicultural education the goal of which is the formation of human culture, a creative personality capable of active and productive life in a multicultural environment. Multicultural education based on the principle of multicultural dialogue can play an important part in this process. As a value, the position of international dialogue culture is formed in the process of socialization, enculturation originating in a particular region and particular circumstances at a particular time. This has led to the necessity to analyze readiness of the young people for interethnic poly-cultural dialogue from the standpoint of a particular socio-cultural space where the general characteristics of this readiness always gains a special character.

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### 1. Introduction

The modern social and cultural situation is characterized by an increasingly intense interaction of cultures, ethnic groups, peoples, mutual influence of diverse cultural systems. At the same time, for groups involved in this process, it often becomes more important to maintain and consolidate their cultural identity, their significance.

The goal of our research is to give a descriptive analysis of the socio-psychological portrait of modern young people living in a multi-ethnic environment of the North-Caucasian Federal District (attitudes, tolerance, identity), to determine the level of preparedness of the young people for the interethnic multicultural dialogue.

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The basis for characterizing the young people was made up by the results of socio-psychological research carried out by the scientific and educational center for psychological support, personal and professional development based in North Caucasus Federal University. The sampling covered young men and women aged 17 to 20.

In Stavropol region which has become the southernmost outpost of Russia at the heart of the cosmopolitan Caucasus, there has developed a long-standing tradition of peaceful coexistence of representatives of many nationalities (according to available data, currently up to 100).

At the beginning of the 1990s, the ethnic composition of Stavropol was relatively homogeneous: 84% of the region population were Russians, the remaining 16% were a mosaic of representatives of many peoples whose number ranged from 70 thousand people (Armenians) to 1 – 2 thousand people (Balkars, Tats, Ingush) or less.

According to the National Population Census of 2010, the list of nationalities of Stavropol region changed. It was caused by natural population reproduction, processes of change under the influence of ethnic intermarriage, and by external migration. Migration flow in Stavropol region has a pronounced multi-ethnic character and a significant impact on the ethnic composition of the region population. The Russian population is still the most numerous (2232.2 thousand people) and all in all it makes up 80.9% of the population of the region. However, according to the regional state statistics committee, the poly-ethnic composition of migration flows leads to the share of the Russian population in the province clearly shrinking. As compared with 2002, the number of the Russians in the region has decreased 0.7 percent.

The study of relations between people of different nationalities and ethnic and cultural groups showed that in educational institutions of Stavropol Territory, there are many problems associated with difficulties of intercultural dialogue in a multi-ethnic educational environment. The high social relevance of the problem of interethnic dialogue for North Caucasus Federal University predetermined its current having diverse contemporary manifestations. The university has more than 28 thousand students of 86 nationalities.

The methodological basis of research of modern Russian youth readiness for intercultural dialogue were: the concept of the dialogue of cultures (Bakhtin, 1986; Bibler, 1990), psychoanalytic theory of S. Freud and his followers, explaining the hostility to other unconscious processes (Adorno, 2002; Berkowitz, 2001), the concept of the activity of mediation of mental development (Ananiev, 2000; Asmolov, 2000; Vygotsky, 1984; Leontiev, 1975; and others); the theory of constructive (Bruner, 1971; and others); approaches putting forward the importance of value orientations in the regulation of individual behavior (Bratus, 1988; Kon, 1984; Mudrik, 2004) and the role of culture of interethnic communication and interpersonal interaction (Andreeva, 1980; Bodalev, 1988); the concept of international education (Dzhunusov, 1980; Kapterev, 2001); theory of tolerance (Drobizheva, 2008; Lebedeva, 1993; Stefanenko, 2009). The fundamental role was also played by the historical features of origin, socio-cultural and psychological characteristics of nations (Arutyunyan, 2014; Bromley, 2001; Benedict, 1934), psychology of behavior of large social groups (Asmolov, 2013; Parigin, 1971), data of studies of ethnic stereotypes and attitudes (Uznadze, 2004; Iadov et al., 2013), the concept of the relationship between language and intercultural interaction (Esadzhanyan, 1984; Ter-Minasova, 2000); ethno-cultorological and ethno-psychological approach (Nalchajyan, 2004; Stefanenko, 2001; and others).

## **2. Discussion of the research outcomes**

### *2.1. Results of evaluating the modern youth environment from the regional standpoint and ethnic composition*

Research into features of the respondents' attitude to topical problems of interethnic dialogue, the legality of cultural, religious and other differences, tolerance, customs, traditions, beliefs, lifestyles, behavior of other people was conducted on a sampling of students in Stavropol Territory from February to April 2014. To estimate the particularities of a tolerant consciousness, general social attitudes, and ethnocentrism, survey methods were used (questionnaire surveys, interviews).

The questionnaires included questions aimed at identifying the ethno-national, cultural and spiritual values of the young people, their readiness for interethnic multicultural dialogue. The total of 54 people took part in the surveys, 15 of them were young women and 39 – young men of 12 different nationalities.

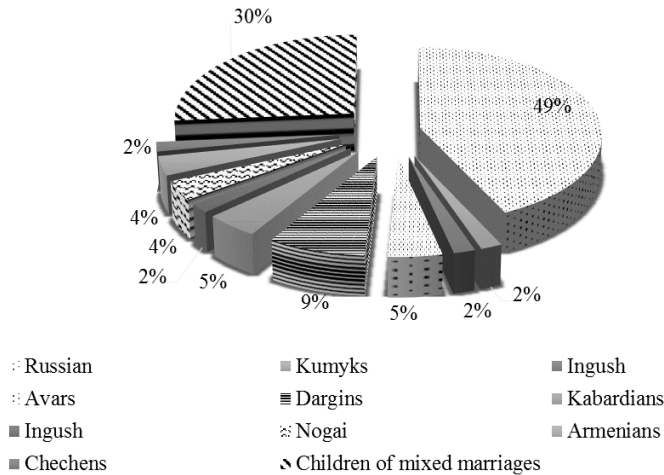


Fig. 1. National composition of sampling

According to the data, 27% of students at the age of 17 years took part in the research. For the most part, these are young people who came to study in the regional center from various regions and localities of the Territory and its areas and faced a "mobile" polynational situation for the first time, so they feel anxious, uncertain and insecure. 70% of the respondents are young people aged 18 – 19 (students of the 2nd – 3rd year) who have adapted to the multinational environment during the student group integration and aggregation along ethnic lines. 3% are students aged 20 having an established ethnic identity generating (both positive and negative) attitudes towards representatives of other nationalities.

The research began with the question "What is your attitude to your own nationality?". The answers suggest that the majority (75%) of the young people are proud of their belonging to their nationality (44% of them are Russian), 20% of respondents say that they do not really care about their nationality. Our investigations have shown that ones who were at a loss to answer the question about their nationality are mainly individuals coming from mixed marriage families. Young people from marginalized ethnic identities balancing between the two cultures failing to adequately master norms and values of any one of them and stumbling over their own identity often experience intrapersonal conflicts which are symptoms of alienation and irregularity.

It should be noted that among those "undecided" there are 45% of representatives of Russian nationality. We dare suggest that in this case Russian ethnic factor is less important than for other ethnic groups, because the Russian-style self-perception, self-identification has some ambivalence in self-determination – namely, as an ethnic group only and as the Russian national core.

Among the young people surveyed, there were none who experienced internal discomfort or shame because of belonging "to their nationality". Nor there were ones who would prefer to be born a man of a different nationality. Numerous studies on ethnocentrism show that all people can be proud of the group to which they belong. With positive ethnocentrism, a person expresses concern for his people, his country and is proud of them; in case of the negative option – he tends to dominate, believes in the superiority of his nation and tries to express this advantage (Smith, 1992). We believe that it is the first position that prevailed in explaining the concept of "proud of their nationality". Such conclusions are confirmed by the analysis of responses to questions concerning participation of the young people in conflicts on a national basis, dominance of feelings that they experience, and what they take into account when dealing with representatives of other nationalities.

### 2.2. Results of the study of general attitudes

Social setting as a state of psychological readiness of the person to behave in a certain way in relation to the object is determined by the person's experience, including one gained from the person's own ethnic group. When

studying the young people's readiness for interethnic dialogue, the study of general social attitudes reveals behaviors and opinions of young people, their being guided by building relationships with members of other ethnic groups, and their attitudes to social reality phenomena.

To measure the general social attitudes allowing us to indirectly explore the current level of prejudice among the young people against members of other nationalities, Elze Frenkel-Brunswick questionnaire was used.

According to the author's position, the more of these statements a respondent agrees with, the more likely he is to be biased against other ethnic groups.

The respondents were ranked by the quantity of points received for the proposed approval (from largest to smallest, Table 1). It can be argued that members of ethnic minorities are characterized by the perception and evaluation of customs, traditions and behaviors of others, primarily through the prism of their own customs and traditions in which they are raised. Prejudice in the majority of small ethnic groups deals with their feeling exclusive, distinct from other people. Therefore, the statement "Only a man like me has the right for happiness" gets a priority position. Russian respondents also have this statement as a priority one. Partly, this is an age-sensitive consequence – the young people are known to be most adamant, emotional and prone to radical decisions, including unauthorized and unlawful ones. However, apparently, it is not only age-appropriate, but also a trait associated with a generation that has formed after the USSR collapse, the more "self-centered" one.

Table 1. Results of measurement of general social attitudes

No.	Statement	Common	Russians	Other nationals
1	Only a man like me has the right for happiness	101	46	55
2	Girls should only learn what will help them around the house	98	45	53
3	There is only one right way to do something	96	46	50
4	It would be better if teachers were stricter	88	38	50
5	Character and personality are given to man by nature	85	38	47
6	If a person is not afraid of anyone, it may be a trap	77	33	44
7	There will always be war – it is a part of human nature	70	33	37

### 2.3. The study of tolerance

In order to determine individual tolerance, "Index of Tolerance" (Soldatova, Shajgerova, Prokofieva, Kravcova, 2008) express questionnaire was used. The technique allows determining the level of tolerance and conducting a qualitative analysis of its aspects.

According to the survey of students in North Caucasus Federal University, their tolerance index figures scored 77, which corresponds to an average level (61-99 points). This level is characterized by a combination of both tolerant and intolerant traits. In some social situations, some young people behave fairly tolerant while others may demonstrate intolerance.

The survey respondents who indicated that they belong to the Russian ethnic group, including the descendants of mixed marriages, have shown the average total tolerance of 77 points. The logic of tolerance comprises following constituents:

- ethnic tolerance as a characteristic of willingness to recognize and accept the legitimacy of the culture, traditions, values, behavior and communication patterns, lifestyles of other ethnoses; here the Russian respondents have a batting average (3.3 points out of 6);
- social tolerance as individual partnerships with various social groups in society also has a pronounced batting average (3.4 points out of 6), which is manifested in one's social responsibility for oneself and for a group of like-minded people, including ethical sphere. Recognition of other social groups' right to exist is due to the social

and psychological maturity of the individual, i.e. they do not only realize their belonging to this or that social groups but also share their value orientation;

- tolerance as a personality trait includes, first of all, value-semantic content where the central place is occupied by respect for an individual, his rights and freedom to be responsible for his own life; each person recognizing this has the same high level (3.4 score of 6).

The personality traits, attitudes and beliefs which largely determine the attitude of a Russian ethnic group representative to the world around him do not always manifest enough tolerance in relation to other ethnic groups in the field of intercultural interaction. This can be most clearly seen in answers to the questions like "the Caucasians will be treated better if they change their behavior". 84% of respondents agree with this statement, pointing out that the intolerant attitude concerns the current behaviors of the Caucasians. "Some nations and peoples are difficult to treat well" – more than a half of the respondents (55%) agree with this statement.

The average level of general tolerance among representatives of ethnic minorities was 81.5 points, which also corresponds to the average level. Tolerant attitudes have the following features:

- Ethnic tolerance – 3 points, which corresponds to the average level;
- Social tolerance – 3.2 points, which also corresponds to the average level;
- Tolerance as a personality trait – 3.3 points – average.

It should be noted that in a group of Russian respondents, about half of the respondents (49.7%) agree with the statement the Caucasians will be treated better if they change their behavior". We can talk about the fact that the young people – representatives of the Caucasian peoples – realize that they do not always demonstrate features of the "Southern nature" reasonably. This phenomenon can be explained as follows: a person entering a new cultural environment (arrival to Stavropol, admission to the university) is for the person a stressful factor reducing the tolerance problem, so for a person having a greater uncertainty and a higher degree of frustration in a foreign cultural environment, it is easier to get into a conflict situation. Under these conditions, the level of ethnic tolerance depends on the ethnic identity of the person with their ethnic group, as well as the direction and content of auto- and heterostereotypes.

Signs of intolerance can be observed in answers to the statement "A strong hand is needed for restoring the order in the country" (72.8% agree with this statement), "the lack of order is very annoying for me" (45.4% agree).

In the group of statements describing tolerance as a personality trait, the largest discrepancy is due to the position – "If a friend has betrayed, you must take revenge on him" (there is an 11% difference in the answers of respondents of various states).

We dare suggest that this phenomenon is due to representatives of the Caucasus region historical way of life. Revenge as a relic of the past is considered by most ethnic minorities to be a sacred duty of every adult male. The revenge is carried out according to tradition, there are legal grounds with explanations regarding the time for revenge, the possibility of its being replaced by a fine and so on. Thus, the expression of sociability is not only an intrinsic appeal that comes from the ill will, but it also is a kind of morality created and fixed in the traditions of the Caucasian peoples. During their stay in the territory of a foreign culture (which Stavropol Territory is for these respondents), any laws and "concepts" are beyond the local consciousness and values of young people. Passionarity of the Caucasians is manifested in their need and desire to change the environment according to their views with the help of a "strong hand" (Gymilev, 1993).

#### *2.4. Results of the study the level of preparedness of students to the interethnic multicultural dialogue*

The questionnaire included questions aimed at identifying the willingness of the young people to learn as much as possible about the ethno-national traditions and customs of representatives of different cultures, a desire to reveal new facets of their culture, interest in the history of their country. The complex issues are interrelated and constitute a model of readiness of students for the interethnic multicultural dialogue.

The possibility of the interethnic multicultural dialogue is estimated to be at a sufficiently high level in the young people of all nationalities participating in the survey – 7.5 points out of 9. The representatives of national minorities (Armenians, Dargin, Kabardians, Avars – 9 points out of 9) are more willing to take part in the dialogue. Representatives of Russian nationality are less willing to engage in the dialogue, with the average value for this

indicator being 6.5 points, which corresponds to the average level of readiness. Assessing the importance of interethnic dialogue in expanding their worldview, over 30% of the respondents believe that today's Russian society is not ready for intercultural interaction. Almost half of them (42.8%) are Russian people.

Such conclusions are made by representatives of the Russian nationality residing within the North Caucasus Federal District due to the inclusion of Stavropol Territory in the North Caucasus Federal District. Higher migration from the six neighboring republics in the Territory, redistribution of spheres of influence of their own ethnic groups in the territory of Stavropol cause resentment among the local population.

Mass movements of non-Russian immigrants are perceived in the region as particularly painful, although it is psychologically understandable that immigrants bring their particular lifestyle, customs, language, personal habits, certain stereotypes that often run counter to customs and traditions of the indigenous population.

The following should also be pointed out. The migration processes have had a significant impact on the labor market increasing the competition for jobs. Arriving to the Territory, the non-Slavic migrants are more focused on business, trade and service sectors where the "real" money turn, which allows them to occupy not the last place in society. This causes irritation in the local population and even fury about the authorities failing to pay enough attention to these processes.

Curiously enough, while showing openness to interethnic multicultural dialogue, 76.5% of the respondents share the assurance that Russia will lose its ethnic identity if it is to promote the interethnic multicultural dialogue.

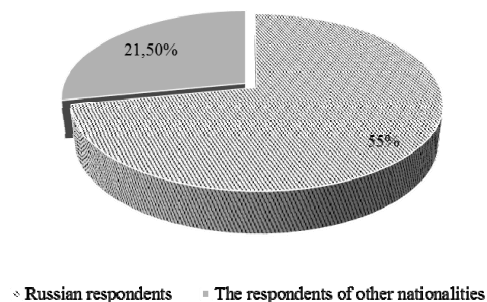


Fig. 2. Results of answers to the question "Will Russia lose its ethnic identity if it promotes the interethnic multicultural dialogue?"

Summing up the answers to the questions on the young people's willingness to get acquainted with the culture, language, traditions, customs and habits of other nationalities, other countries, as well as the willingness to get acquainted with the history of their country, we can draw the following conclusions:

- the level of readiness to study the cultural traditions of other nations is average (5.7 points out of 9). The greatest willingness to do so is demonstrated by representatives of the Russian nationality, 55% of respondents have a high level of readiness (9 points out of 9), while the figure is only 28.6% for other nationalities (Avars, Armenians, Kumyks);
- the respondents are more willing to learn foreign languages and to get acquainted with the history of other countries (7.6 points out of 9) than travel to Russia and get acquainted with the history and traditions of the Russian people (3.4 points out of 9). In this case, the majority of those who are not ready to get acquainted with the history of Russia are ethnic minorities (62%);
- quite surprising is the fact that the judgment "there is no "bad culture" – there are people who do not want to understand the "foreign" culture" has scored highest (8.3 points out of 9). While the young people do not consider themselves to be unwilling to understand a different culture, they do not set goals to study it.

To confirm the above data, we quote some answers to the questionnaire.

"How often do you use foreign words? Is it necessary?" 50% of the respondents answered that they use foreign words fairly often "because it is fashionable", because they "develop themselves", "to communicate with foreigners".

"Russia is a multinational country" – this is pointed out by all respondents participating in the survey. However, only 42.5% of the young people believe that ethnic multicultural dialogue will contribute to global integration, and 17.5% say that this will lead to a loss of national or ethnic identity.

62.5% of students believe that the interethnic multicultural dialogue will promote peace and help avoid interethnic conflict, but among those who do not believe this over 60% are of Russian nationality.

### 3. Conclusion

Let us sum up conclusions and prospects of the young people's readiness for interethnic dialogue in a multi-ethnic educational environment of the university.

Determining the socio-psychological portrait of modern young people living in a multicultural environment, their current ethno-psychological status allows us to predict a young man's behavior when facing another ethnic culture and serves as the basis for shaping a sensible openness for interethnic multicultural interaction.

Students as a socio-cultural group in conditions of pronounced regional multiculturalism, given the current socio-cultural situation in the North Caucasus Federal District (intensification of migration processes, consolidation of intercultural interaction processes, institutionalization and consolidation of clan regimes), have shown certain transformations in general social attitudes, features of tolerance mechanisms of interethnic perceptions, readiness for the interethnic multicultural dialogue.

Studies have shown that a positive image of one's group (pride of one's nation, readiness to defend one's own ethnic group etc.) has been formed in the youth subculture. Among the young people surveyed, there were none who experienced internal discomfort or shame at belonging to "their nationality", nor there were any who would prefer to be born in a different nationality.

As for the image of other cultures, the presence of negative attitudes, biases, prejudices and stereotypes is traced. Autoethnostereotype, or the image of one's own people, always looks incomparably more attractive than the image of any other nation. A noticeable quantity of the young people tend to see other people through the prism of ethnic favoritism or, conversely, ethnic discrimination. It is only comparison of cultural values through the prism of the familiar / unfamiliar phenomena that affects the development of "us" vs. "them" criteria which are likely to be misunderstood and therefore to be understood by the young people as posing an essential threat to their "own" ethno-cultural group. As a consequence – there is a desire of the young people to introduce restraints of rights and liberties of a nation in various social sectors activities (42%).

However, I would like to note the following positive factors: lack of open ethnic conflicts; the desire to establish an open, trusting relationships with representatives of other ethnic groups, expression of interest for them (27.8% of the respondents); absence of acute tension, apparent hostility; positive attitude to traditions of other nationalities (72%); positive attitude of children's parents to their friends of other ethnicity (80%).

The ethnic revival has caused a crisis of identity manifesting itself in stagnation of moral principles. Moreover, being an inherently profoundly positive phenomenon, it often leads to increased ethnocentrism which in the face of declining moral consciousness of society has got negative consequences. It consolidates, exaggerates and overemphasizes the difference between "friends" and "foes", which leads to the rise of nationalism.

It has been found that Russian ethnic factor is less important than other ethnic groups, because in Russian self-perception, self-identification there still remains a certain duality between self-determination as an ethnic group only and as the national core of Russia. In answers of the representatives of other nationalities, signs of Russophobia can be seen – of a negative or contemptuous attitude toward Russian culture and national identity and to the Russian people. Representatives of these ethnic groups often allow themselves to demonstrate negative ways toward members of other ethnic groups, including the Russians. However, as our study shows, a special status of the Russian people is supported by ethnic minorities. The Russians are considered to be a guarantee of security and stability as the most socially referent group, without which ethnic and religious extremism would consolidate its positions.

One of the semantic unit forms is ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance. According to the survey of students at SKFU, the index figures correspond to the average level of tolerance. This level is characterized by a combination of both tolerant and intolerant traits. In some social situations, young people behave fairly tolerant while others may

demonstrate intolerance. The most pronounced signs of intolerance were observed in the responses to questions like "the Caucasians will be treated better if they change their behavior" (84% of the Russian respondents, 49.7% – other nationalities), "Some nations and peoples are difficult to treat well" (55 %). Signs of intolerance can be seen in responses to the statement "A strong hand is needed for restoring the order in the country" – 72.8% agree with this statement.

An individual's willingness to take part in an interethnic multicultural dialogue within the socio-cultural environment can be considered as an important mechanism of overcoming the negative effects associated with the national question. Studies have shown that indicators of readiness for interethnic multicultural dialogue are controversial. So, the young people of all nationalities participating in the survey estimated the possibility of interethnic multicultural dialogue as a high enough. A higher level of readiness is shown by representatives of national minorities (Dargins, Kabardians, Avars and others). As for the Russian respondents, their willingness to engage in dialogue corresponds to the average level.

A third of the respondents (30%) believe that today's Russian society is not ready for intercultural interaction. Representatives of the ethnic majority (Russian) believe that the Russian government should be more involved in the regulation of international relations, with 62.5% of students believing that ethnic multicultural dialogue will bring peace and help avoiding ethnic conflicts. However, 76.5% of respondents of all nationalities share the assurance that Russia will lose its ethnic identity if it is to promote the interethnic multicultural dialogue.

Being ready for the interethnic multicultural dialogue implies a willingness to learn the uniqueness, originality of each culture, the desire to get acquainted with treasures of this culture. It is via the knowledge of the culture that self-knowledge and self-actualization come forming a system of subjective meanings and values.

The analysis of the young people's level of preparedness to get acquainted with the culture, language, traditions, customs, and habits of other nationalities, other countries, as well as the willingness to get acquainted with the history of their country, leads to the conclusion that representatives of Russian nationality (55%) demonstrate the greatest willingness. As for representatives of national minorities, they are less eager to get acquainted with the history of Russia (28.6%).

Being ready for the interethnic multicultural dialogue in the socio-cultural environment is not a guaranteed formed knowledge and skills specially created by the external conditions. Such readiness is not given to one as is – it comes with the potential implementation of a constructive principle updated not only under certain conditions but also by the relevant efforts of the individual. For the external and internal conditions in this sphere to be followed by semantic and other human activity, its free and responsible self-determination in each specific situation is essential. Therefore, the first objective is to build a dynamic network of cultural events for the dialogue participants in each of the situations unfolding into a positive dialogue with their peers and the teacher, with the goal of coinciding at a common intersection point of the subjective culture practice, subjective experience of tolerant attitudes, young people's free and responsible choice of "value attitude to life". Among the most productive and efficient mechanisms, we should mention familiarization with certain ethno-cultural groups. An example of a positive mechanism of forming the readiness for interethnic multicultural dialogue can become research, creativity, role play games, making news, practice-oriented projects undertaken within the framework of the regional, inter-university, highest level competitions conducted by students themselves as well as jointly with teachers and representatives of various ethnic groups.

By declaring the positive dialogism in interethnic relations, leaders of ethnic diasporas establish a solid social and moral standards structure in a multi-ethnic region, which will reduce anxiety, insecurity and uncertainty in life both for the young people and adults. This, in its turn, is to activate the process of self-development being a regulator of behavior and activity, as well as the development of value-motivational sphere; it will lead to system settings adjustment for overcoming the stereotypes in perception of others and interaction of various nations.

It is education as a form of socio-cultural practices, active influence on the formation of readiness for interethnic multicultural dialogue that should provide the basis for consolidating this process.

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