

## DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF EDUCATORS THROUGH "ONION" PROJECT

*The article deals with the intercultural competence development of educators by means of "Onion" project completion. It is stated that not all the strategies used for developing intercultural competence of educators are proved to be effective which causes difficulties with applying theory to practice. To solve this problem it is suggested to use "Onion" project which requires exploiting theoretical and practical findings to conduct a comparative study. The author draws attention to the importance of intercultural competence of educators in a contemporary society for creating educational environment, which is respectful and inclusive of multiple cultural perspectives.*

*The aims of "Onion" project include gaining an understanding of comparative education, intercultural theories in the education and different dimensions of national culture through demonstration, personalization, discussion, and presentation. The article explains the name of the project, which refers to the structure of educational systems, consisted of different layers or educational agents such as educators, educational institutions, and governments that are influenced by culture. The article emphasizes the importance of educators who are in the core of the educational system and determine change of other layers. It is stated that in order to complete "Onion" project, educators choose two countries and conduct comparative analysis of both educational systems according to different layers. Thus, "Onion" project, which requires application of Hofstede dimensions, thorough analysis of educational issues from comparative education perspective, presentation of the results and participation in the follow-up discussion, is determined as an effective method of developing intercultural competence of educators. Future research may be aimed at exploiting "Onion" project for a wider range of learners.*

**Key words:** intercultural competence, "Onion" project, Hofstede dimensions, professional development, educators.

Contemporary society characterized by mobility of teachers and students requires creation of educational environment, which promotes successful intercultural communication. Intercultural competence development of educators leads not only to their personal and professional changes, but creates incentives for growth and change at the levels of educational institutions and governments. However, not all the strategies used for developing intercultural competence of educators are effective which leads to their inability to apply theory to practice.

The aim of this article is to analyze and highlight the strategies of developing intercultural competence by means of "Onion" project completed by educators. To achieve this aim it is necessary to investigate the importance of intercultural competence for educators in a globalised society, describe characteristics of the project and reveal the incentives of successful completion of "Onion" project.

The issues connected with creating intercultural environment were highlighted in the works of such prominent researchers as E. Hall, G. Hofstede, R. Porter, E. Rogers, L. Samovar, A. Smith and others. Nevertheless, the issue of effective methods for intercultural competence development of educators needs further investigations. The report "21st-Century Competencies and Their Impact: An Interdisciplinary Literature Review" summarized theoretical and practical findings and developed 15 competency areas viewed from five broad categories: analytic skills, interpersonal skills, ability to execute, information processing and capacity for change [4, p. 1]. It is stated in the report that all the competencies should be considered as closely connected with the given contexts. According to the report, the importance of cross-cultural fluency along with systems thinking and financial literacy is inevitably growing in contemporary global economy [4, p. 2].

The report provided guidelines for American universities, which develop their own competency frameworks. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competency Table, prepared for Masters programs by Columbia university faculty and students' working group, places intercultural competence among the most important. Cultural responsiveness, which belongs to the category "self in system", is defined as the ability to create "a safe learning environment that is knowledgeable, respectful and inclusive of multiple cultural perspectives [1]".

The development of intercultural competence is impossible without overcoming ethnocentrism, which is one of the most common problems hindering successful intercultural communication.

According to L. Samovar, ethnocentrism implies that one culture is considered to be superior to others, which may be explained by the lack of knowledge about peculiarities of other cultures [6, p. 10-13]. Claremont Graduate University (CGU) developed a course "TLCC: Teaching and Learning in Cultural Contexts" aimed at the development of intercultural competence through gaining an understanding of comparative education, intercultural theories in the education and different dimensions of national culture [2]. The course combines theory with practice, thus each new piece of information is analyzed, discussed and even demonstrated by educators, who personalize it and think about the ways of application this newly acquired knowledge according to their educational environment. "Onion" project completion is the main requirement of TLCC course. The name of the project refers to the structure of educational systems in a global age which are represented by educators, educational institutions, governments as educational agents and culture which influences all the other agents [2].

According to P. Cranton, educators represent the core of any educational system (the inner layer of an "onion"). Moreover, their own development, which consists of critical reflection (CR), self-directed learning (SDL) and transformative learning (TL), determines growth and change of other layers [3, p. 165]. The level of their engagement in professional development depends on the educators' individual differences such as learning style, values, and others.

The layer of educational institution determines teaching context like specialization, characteristics of the learners, salary, classrooms and other facilities. The layer of government provides national education guidance. P. Cranton claims that depending on individual characteristics of educators, some contexts may either facilitate or hinder their professional development. According to P. Cranton, the influence of the culture of a particular country, as well as subcultures within larger societies, on educators, educational institutions, governments, cannot be denied [3, p. 165].

In order to complete "Onion" project and use Hofstede dimensions of national culture (Power Distance (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)), which are based on relative scores, educators choose two countries and then conduct comparative analysis of both educational systems according to different layers [5]. At the end of the course "TLCC: Teaching and Learning in Cultural Contexts" educators prepare multimedia presentations of their "Onion" projects, which provides an opportunity for them to learn more about different cultures from comparative education perspective. Moreover, issues connected with intercultural peculiarities of national educational systems present rich material for follow-up discussions.

"Onion" project gives educators an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching experience related to the chosen countries, study the materials like educational bills, mission statements, handbooks, surveys, yearbooks, to name just a few. Consequently, overcoming ethnocentrism leads to ruining stereotypes and getting a better understanding of educator performance incentives in multicultural educational community.

To conclude, "Onion" project which requires application of Hofstede dimensions, thorough analysis of educational issues from comparative education perspective, presentation of the results and taking part in follow-up discussion, is considered to be an effective method of developing intercultural competence of educators.

Further research may be devoted to developing "Onion" project aimed at intercultural competence of a wider range of learners.

## References

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## РОЗВИТОК МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ ПРОЕКТУ "ONION"

*У статті обговорюється один зі шляхів розвитку професійної міжкультурної компетентності викладачів за допомогою участі в проекті "Onion". Цей проект передбачає проведення порівняльного міжкультурного дослідження, використання вимірів культури Гофстеде, презентацію результатів та участь у дискусії, що й обумовлює його ефективність. Назва проекту пов'язана зі структурою освітніх систем, які включають педагогів, які знаходяться в центрі системи освіти і визначають зростання і зміни системи в цілому.*

**Ключові слова:** міжкультурна компетентність, проект "Onion", виміри культури Гофстеде, професійний розвиток, викладачі.

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## РАЗВИТИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЕЙ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ ПРОЕКТА "ONION"

*В статье обсуждается один из способов развития профессиональной межкультурной компетентности преподавателей с помощью проекта "Onion", предполагающего проведение сравнительного межкультурного исследования, использование измерений культуры Хофстеде, презентацию результатов и участие в дискуссии, что обуславливает его эффективность. Название проекта связано со структурой образовательных систем, включающих педагогов, которые находятся в центре системы образования и определяют рост и изменение системы в целом.*

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурная компетентность, проект "Onion", измерения культуры Хофстеде, профессиональное развитие, преподаватели.

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