

SHAPING TOLERANCE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN YOUNG SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the importance of developing tolerance and intercultural communication among young school-age children. The pedagogical and psychological foundations of the concept of tolerance are examined, highlighting their role in the educational process. Additionally, effective methods for fostering intercultural communication skills in children are discussed, including incorporating elements of intercultural education into the curriculum, the role of family upbringing, creating a multicultural environment, and utilizing information technologies. The article also explores international experiences in promoting tolerance and provides practical recommendations.

Keywords: Tolerance, intercultural communication, social adaptation, education, upbringing, national culture, empathy, tolerance, pedagogy, psychology, globalization, communication, teaching methods, family upbringing, cultural diversity, interactive learning.

Introduction

The modern process of globalization presents humanity with both new opportunities and new challenges. Ensuring effective communication between representatives of different nations and cultures, maintaining social harmony, and fostering mutual understanding are crucial for societal progress. In this context, the education and upbringing of children play a decisive role, as an individual's social consciousness and worldview are shaped during their school years.

Psychologist Jean Piaget (1952) emphasized in his research that children's cognitive development occurs in stages. In particular, during the ages of 6–10, children actively absorb their surroundings, enriching their perceptions of society and culture. Lev Vygotsky (1978), in his theory of social learning, highlighted that

children acquire social and moral norms through interaction and collective activities. Therefore, teaching school-age children tolerance and intercultural communication significantly influences their personal and social development in the future.

Tolerance is the ability to respect the rights and freedoms of others, accepting different perspectives, beliefs, and cultural characteristics. It not only involves understanding other cultures but also includes collaborating with them, exchanging ideas, and being open to dialogue. UNESCO (1995) defines tolerance as a principle based on respect for human rights and cultural diversity. Adhering to these principles creates a solid foundation for peace and stability in society.

There are various methods for promoting tolerance and intercultural communication in school education. In pedagogy, this process is explained through the concept of intercultural education. John Dewey (1916) argued that education should serve to cultivate humanitarian and democratic values.

To instill tolerance, it is essential to include information about different cultures, customs, and traditions in school curricula. For instance, subjects such as history, literature, and geography should provide students with knowledge of the cultural heritage and values of different peoples. Additionally, interactive methods—such as role-playing games, debates, and group projects—can effectively engage children in communication and help them develop social skills.

The Role of Family in Teaching Tolerance

The family environment also plays a vital role in fostering tolerance and intercultural communication. As Lev Vygotsky pointed out, children learn most from adults, particularly their parents, during socialization. Thus, the process of teaching tolerance should begin at home.

Parents should encourage open discussions about different cultures and nationalities, read folktales and stories from various countries, and provide opportunities for their children to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, parents must also practice tolerance themselves, as children learn by observing the behavior of adults.

Modern technology and mass media play a significant role in shaping children's perceptions of tolerance. In today's digital age, the internet, television, social networks, and e-learning platforms provide opportunities to broaden children's worldviews.

Marshall McLuhan (1964) emphasized the impact of mass media on human thought. In this regard, documentaries, educational cartoons, and international online projects designed for children can enrich their understanding of different cultures. Virtual cultural tours and interactive games allow children to explore global traditions, while promoting interest in foreign languages further supports the development of intercultural communication skills.

Conclusion

Tolerance and intercultural communication are essential factors in ensuring sustainable social development and peace. Samuel Huntington (1996), in his Clash of Civilizations theory, emphasized the role of education in preventing misunderstandings and conflicts between cultures. Therefore, fostering tolerance in children is not only a personal necessity but also a social imperative.

To establish an education system based on tolerance, educational institutions, families, and society must work together. Teachers and parents should teach children to respect other cultures and values while developing their social cooperation and communication skills. This process not only helps children build good relationships with those around them but also enables them to interact effectively with people from different nations and cultural backgrounds.

The development of tolerance is a continuous process. If today's children grow up with openness to diverse cultures and perspectives, tomorrow's society will be peaceful, united, and progressive.

Moreover, intercultural dialogue serves as a solid foundation not only for personal growth but also for the stability and prosperity of humanity as a whole. Efforts aimed at fostering and strengthening tolerance contribute to global unity. Therefore, we are responsible for guiding future generations toward a mindset of respect, empathy, and inclusivity.

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