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## **WAYS OF PREVENTING EXTREMISM AMONG YOUTH THROUGH INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

**Author:** Anastasia Khodakova

**Supervisor:** Katarzyna Kubin, The Forum for Social Diversity

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## 1. Introduction

Sociological and media researches have shown a rapid increase in ethnic xenophobia in Russia in recent years. As Galina Kozhevnikova, who is a deputy director of the “Sova” analytical center monitoring racism activities states, “racist violence in Russia goes up by 30-40% every year and is becoming more organized and demonstrative.”<sup>1</sup>

The issue of extremism prevention is closely linked to promoting tolerance for ethnic differences, which is not a priority in Tula Oblast (region) in Russia, which is relatively homogeneous in terms of the ethnic background of the population (95% Russians). The existing social policy, which addresses issues of tolerance, is focused on work with problem youth, while work with youth in general on tolerance issues is not specified in the policy documents in relation to schools. Meanwhile, Doctor Kaganovich, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Head of the Department of Theory and Methodology of General Education in the Novgorod Regional Center of Education Development, comments that “the issue of forming tolerant consciousness is more than urgent and its solution, to my mind, demands a complex approach as well as organization of a system of purposeful activities both on the level of every educational institution and within the framework of the whole educational system in Russia.”<sup>2</sup> Like Kaganovich, many specialists indicate that the long-term goal of preventing extremism is best achieved through systematic activities in education.

Intercultural education is one approach to purposeful activities and teaching practices in educational institutions, helping to develop tolerant attitudes among youth. The universal goals of intercultural education stated by Nieke<sup>3</sup> include: “1) the recognition of one’s own, unavoidable ethnocentrism; 2) dealing with the ”other”; 3) the establishment of tolerance; 4) the acceptance of ethnicity; attentiveness to minority languages; 5) problematising of racism; 6) emphasis on commonalities in order to avoid the threats of ethnicising; 7) encouraging solidarity; taking into account the asymmetry between the majority and the minority; 8) practicing non-violent conflict resolution in response to cultural conflicts and cultural relativism; 9) raising awareness of the potential for mutual cultural enrichment; 10) development of a “we-identity”: surpassing the limits of one’s own group in global responsibility and in affirmation of universal humanity.”

In response to the documented need for tolerance education in Tula Oblast and in keeping with the framework outlined by an intercultural educational approach, this policy brief gives recommendations for work with youth at the high school level in Tula Oblast in Russia aimed at preventing extremism and intolerance through intercultural education.

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<sup>1</sup> Galina Kozhevnikova. Racism and xenophobia / G. Kozhevnikova // Index / Dosje na cenzuru. - #24. – 2006. (<http://www.index.org.ru/journal/24/koz24.html>)

<sup>2</sup> Ways of forming cultural consciousness in the Russian school/ S.L.Kaganovich // Intercultural dialogue. <http://www.tolz.ru/library/?de=0&id=393>

<sup>3</sup> Intercultural Education in the European Context: Analysis of Selected European Curricula / Sasa Puzic, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb. – Metodika 15 (2008). – p.390-407.

The paper analyses existing legislation and programs in Tula Oblast, Russia, connected with prevention of extremism and promotion of tolerance through educational institutions. The activities of Warsaw-based non-governmental organizations and educational institutions are discussed, providing examples of good practices in the field of tolerance and intercultural education. The work of these institutions may be of interest to the regional departments in Tula that are responsible for developing youth policy and guidelines for schools (including the Department of Education and the Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy in the regional government of Tula). The examples of Warsaw institutions can also be of interest to school administrators and teachers working in Tula who are responsible for direct implementation of tolerance and intercultural education. The final part includes recommendations for changing the policy in Tula Oblast, Russia and steering it in the direction of introducing intercultural education in schools.

## **2. Problem description**

### **2.1 Definition of the problem of extremist behavior**

There are several legal documents that outline what qualifies as extremist behavior.

According to federal law against extremism<sup>4</sup>, extremist activity among other forms includes “fomenting of racial, national or religious discord; derogation on a national basis; mass disorders, hooliganism and vandalism acts based on ideological, political, racial, national or religious hatred as well as hatred towards some social group; propaganda of exceptionality, superiority or inferiority of citizens based on their religious, social, racial, national or language background; infringement on the rights and freedoms of a person and citizen, causing damage to citizens’ health and property because of their views, racial, national, religious or social background.”

An official definition of extremism *among youth* was given in a strategic letter to the heads of youth policy bodies in the Russian Federation (in Tula, this is the Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy) signed by the Head of the Department for Youth policy and Social Ties, B.B. Gusev, on April 7, 2011<sup>5</sup>: “Extremism among youth can be regarded as an inadequate way of solving social and political conflicts of some youth in class, ethnic, religious and other relationships by the subjects of such relationships”. This definition is more general than the previous one given in the law, but it is accompanied by a detailed supplement on forms of and factors affecting extremism and legal norms to counteract it. The point of the letter was to outline an action plan, including such steps as developing a regional program on prevention of extremism, conducting seminars, forming work groups and defining an official responsible to implement the steps.

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<sup>4</sup> Federal law «About prevention of extremist activity» № 114-ФЗ от 25.06.2002 года (в ред. Федеральных законов от 27.07.2006 № 148-ФЗ, от 27.07.2006 № 153-ФЗ).

<sup>5</sup> Prevention of extremism and nationalism among youth. Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy in Tula region. [http://www.dstm71.ru/activity/youth/prevention-of-drug-abuse-and-anti-social-phenomena-in-youth/prevention-of-extremism-and-nationalism-in-youth/?page\\_id=id\\_521](http://www.dstm71.ru/activity/youth/prevention-of-drug-abuse-and-anti-social-phenomena-in-youth/prevention-of-extremism-and-nationalism-in-youth/?page_id=id_521)

**The law is detailed enough when it comes to determining extremist activity and punishment measures, but it does not include guidelines for regional programs and regional educational policy. For this reason, we do not have an educational policy on tolerance/intercultural education.**

## **2.2 Symptoms of the problem**

The urgent need to prevent extremism and nationalism in Tula Oblast can be seen from media headlines and sociological research. Sociological research completed in 2002<sup>6</sup> showed that respondents worried about nationalism in Tula Oblast. According to the research results, nationalism was rated third in terms of the most important problems in Tula Oblast. Every fifth Russian (19.8%) and every third representative of national minorities (35.2%) considers nationalism the most important problem for the city of Tula. More recent studies among youth<sup>7</sup> (2008) show that the situation has worsened. More than half of respondents (52.3%) consider interethnic relations in Russia to be tense. 80.3% of respondents agree with the statement that ‘nowadays the problem of interethnic intolerance is becoming more and more urgent’.

The findings from these studies are reflected in the news presented in the media. For instance, on the website of the Commission Inquiry Board in Tula Oblast,<sup>8</sup> (which is the main body responsible for investigation and prevention of crimes), it was reported that a 24-year-old Tula citizen distributed a leaflet to an open social network, ‘Vkontakte’, which incited violence against Caucasians (the Caucasus ethnic group). In May 2011, his criminal case proceeded to court. Another example is from headlines in national newspapers citing Tula officials’ views on treating the problem of ethnic intolerance. On May 2, 2011, national independent newspaper ‘Vzglyad’ [‘Viewpoint’] wrote<sup>9</sup>: “Tula police prevented a massive fight between radical youth\nationalists and Caucasians”. ‘Preventive measures’ were taken, according to the head of the PR service of the regional police organization: heads of the Caucasian group were warned that such events as festivals of their culture are forbidden. Such events show that intolerance and extremism are a problem not only because of the attitudes among the general population, but also because of the practices of officials representing Tula Oblast public administration.

I believe that as long as young people commit crimes disparaging the human dignity of people of other ethnic groups, the regional policy requires improvement.

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<sup>6</sup> The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and public association “Russian Renaissance”, 2002. (Situation in Tula region <http://www.indem.ru/ceprs/Minorities/Tula/Tula01.htm>).

<sup>7</sup> The research of 2008 “Problem of ethnic tolerance in the perception of youth in Tula region” by the Laboratory of sociological research and public opinion studies of the municipal institution of social service for youth “Center for social and psychological help for youth “Chance” and the Committee of Youth Policy in Tula region. 500 respondents aged 14 to 30 were interviewed in Tula and district centers (Uzlovaya, Novomoskovsk, Kimovsk, Alexin, Efremov, Leninskiy)

<sup>8</sup> Следственное управление Следственного комитета РФ по Тульской обл. <http://sk-tula.ru/news/detail.php?id=1568>

<sup>9</sup> Vzglyad. Business newspaper. The fight between nationalists and Caucasians has stopped in Tula. <http://vz.ru/news/2011/5/2/488281.html> (May 2, 2011)

Moreover, the nationalist movement in Tula is becoming more influential. The website of the National Union of Tula Oblast, a radical political organization, is open to everyone and misleads youth about the meaning of the word ‘nationalism’ and spreading intolerant views. For instance, they suggest that the dictionary definition of nationalism is “loyalty to a nation, defense of national unity and independence”. At the same time, they omit important additional information, which should specify that nationalism involves “*especially* : a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups”.<sup>10</sup> People who express nationalist ideas are becoming increasingly active by organizing rallies in Tula and joining organized nationalist movements. According to the National Union of Tula Oblast<sup>11</sup> about 100 Tula citizens went to Moscow to take part in the ‘Russian march’ on November 4, 2010, organized by a radical organization ‘Movement against illegal immigration.’ As stated on Interfax<sup>12</sup>, on June 5, 2011, city authorities allowed nationalists to hold a rally titled ‘Stop feeding the Caucasus!’ on the outskirts of Tula, but the nationalists intended to do so in the city centre. The police stopped them and, for their attempt to organize an unauthorized rally, the organizers got away with just a prosecutor’s warning. This tendency toward growing nationalist sentiment in Tula Oblast, which the above mentioned activities illustrate, was confirmed in a study<sup>13</sup> where nearly half (49.9%) of the respondents in Tula Oblast support the idea of “Russia for Russians”.

Similarly, research by the ‘Chance’ Centre, a leading youth social service and research centre in Tula Oblast, concluded that the level of interethnic tolerance among Tula youth is decreasing, while xenophobic attitudes and behaviors are increasing<sup>14</sup>.

## **2.3 Regional policy on the problem in Tula**

### **2.3.1 State departments and institutions involved**

In Tula Oblast, several public bodies cooperate to address the problem of extremism. Their cooperation is regulated to some extent by a governor’s decree, whereby specific activities are assigned to the following:

- Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy,

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<sup>10</sup> Nationalism. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism>

<sup>11</sup> National Union of Tula region <http://home.tula.net/nstula/archive/Tuliaky%20na%20RM.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/Center/news.asp?id=236129&sec=1671>

<sup>13</sup> Research carried out in 2008 “Problem of ethnic tolerance in the perception of youth in Tula region” by the Laboratory of sociological research and public opinion studies of the municipal institution of social service for youth, the Center for social and psychological help for youth “Chance” and the Committee of Youth Policy in Tula region. 500 respondents aged 14 to 30 were interviewed in Tula and district centers (Uzlovaya, Novomoskovsk, Kimovsk, Alexin, Efremov, Leninskiy)

<sup>14</sup> 2008 “Problem of ethnic tolerance in the perception of youth in Tula region” by the Laboratory of sociological research and public opinion studies of the municipal institution of social service for youth, the Center for social and psychological help for youth “Chance” and the Committee of Youth Policy in Tula region. 500 respondents aged 14 to 30 were interviewed in Tula and district centers (Uzlovaya, Novomoskovsk, Kimovsk, Alexin, Efremov, Leninskiy).

- Department of Education of Tula region (Division of Additional and Moral Education Development),
- Centre of prevention of extremism (under the supervision of the regional police organization - Internal Affairs Division (UVD)).

Although these institutions are charged with the responsibility of running activities that prevent extremism, there are considerable barriers which make their work harder. The Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy does not have a special-purpose program and budget expenses planned for the issue of extremism. It acts as a supporting institution that is responsible for activities that relate to preventive measures to overcome nationalism and xenophobia among youth: 1) monitoring and sociological research to determine cases of extremist views among youth, 2) festivals of national culture, 3) an educational program for youth summer camps for prevention of ethnic and religious extremism as well as interethnic conflicts. The information on the website of the Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy is limited to a general description of the directions of their activities. Few practical guidelines have been drawn up and introduced for organizing specific activities in schools. Moreover, an important drawback is that there are no regular measures or programs incorporated into schools, which have direct and consistent contact with youth and are thus suitable places to locate and implement tolerance education. As an official from the department commented, work in schools is the responsibility of the Department of Education, whereas supporting youth organizations and working with representatives of national diasporas is the responsibility of the Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy. And these two aspects are closely interconnected, which is why it is important for them to cooperate.

The Department of Education is responsible for writing and partly implementing a 3-year target program of moral education, which includes cultural awareness activities. The previous program of 2009-2011 was aimed mostly at creating awareness of Slavic culture, the Orthodox religion and promoting patriotic values. It will be analyzed in section 2.3.2. The future program for 2012-2015 is not publicly available yet, as it is being negotiated.

Work with schools should be directed not only at pupils, but at teachers as well. For this reason, it is important to consider teacher-training institutions in the region. The major institutions responsible for teacher-training and teachers' professional development in Tula Oblast are the 'Lev Tolstoy' Tula State Pedagogical University (TSPU) and the Institute of Teachers' Professional Development and Further Training (ITPD).

Finally, the Center for the Prevention of Extremism is also a relevant administrative body in Tula Oblast. As stated in the Appendix to Administrative Decree #300 (14.02.2011), the Center fulfils several functions to improve the mechanism for preventing terrorist and extremist activities in Tula. This comprises gathering information about persons and organizations involved in extremist activities; monitoring persons who have been incarcerated for extremist crimes; explanatory work with leaders of

political parties and public organizations; cooperation with leaders of national diasporas and religious groups to bar nationalism and religious extremism; media monitoring, including Internet; prevention of the establishment and registering of radical political and religious organizations.

The Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy and the Department of Education try to work together. The former organizes seminars with the support of the latter. However, it focuses on work with problem youth and does not cooperate with the Department of Education on work with youth in general and thus cannot provide a complex response to the problem of nationalism and extremism in Tula Oblast.

### **2.3.2 Strategic documents from a historical perspective**

I have focused on two main strategic policy documents below. One is on the federal level, developed in cooperation among eight ministries and institutions: the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), the Russian Academy of Education (RAE), scientific institutions and the Attorney General's Office and implemented by the Institute of RAS, RAE and educational institutions. The second document relates to the regional level of Tula, and is outlined and implemented by the Department of Education.

The federal target program of 2001-2005: "Forming tolerance awareness and prevention of extremism in Russian society" was aimed at introducing tolerance-related materials at all levels of education, including schools in general, teacher-training institutions and teachers' professional development establishments. The stated objectives were to introduce in 50 regions at least 10 programs in schools, 3 programs for teachers' professional development, as well as creating tolerance centers. These activities were supported on the regional level, though there was no money budgeted for this purpose. However, the results in Tula do not correspond to the stated objectives as tolerance programs have not been introduced in schools and in teachers' professional development.

The long-term target program of moral education realized by the Department of Education of Tula Oblast in the years 2009-2011 was aimed, above all, at creating awareness of Slavic culture and the Orthodox religion and promoting patriotic values. An analysis of the program shows that out of 11 courses planned, only half a course covered the development of resources and support materials for the professional development of teachers in the field of tolerance education. The one (half) special course mentioned above is insufficient for at least three main reasons: 1) it does not reach the necessary number of participants, 2) it is too theoretical and should be combined with practical workshops, 3) teachers should be supported with methodological materials and teaching resources. Moreover, only 1 out of 12 grassroots activities was connected with creating multicultural awareness (a special course entitled 'Intercultural Dialogue as a factor of moral education', at the Interregional Cossack Fair: "On the Don we stand! The Don we glorify!").

Increasing nationalism among youth in the region is indicative of the urgent need to modify the measures in the target program so that the focus would be not on Slavic culture and the Orthodox religion, which are surely predominant in the region, but rather on a diversity of cultures and religions, especially those that can be found on the territory of the Russian federation. This would help to establish tolerance and develop abilities in schoolchildren that will prepare them for living in a multicultural society, which is one of the principles of intercultural education (Puzic<sup>15</sup>).

In light of the evidence presented in earlier sections of this paper that extremism is growing in Tula Oblast, it is reasonable to conclude that the above described measures were not effective in preventing extremism in Tula Oblast and in promoting tolerant behavior among youth.

### **2.3.3 Existing recommendations**

One of the most detailed and practice-oriented documents outlining current regional policy for preventing extremism is a document entitled “Recommendations for prevention of extremism among youth”<sup>16</sup>, which uses data from 2009-2010. This document focuses special attention on measures directed towards college and university students and sports fans. For example, recommended measures to prevent extremism among students (aged 17-22) include:

- 1) increasing the role of student organizations and their influence on processes in the educational environment;
- 2) organizing optional courses to study law on prevention of extremism, creating awareness through billboards and law organizations (police structures);
- 3) monitoring study programs and textbooks to find out those orientated towards fomenting ethnical conflicts;
- 4) establishing the number of students held administratively or criminally liable as one of the criteria of colleges’ educational work;
- 5) developing and implementing a series of measures to strengthen interethnic dialogue and internationalism among students, including international clubs, with the help of national diasporas;
- 6) introducing the teaching of the basics of interethnic communication and international education into college curricula;
- 7) introducing activities promoting cultures and traditions of peoples of Russia, teaching conflict resolution skills, creating awareness of the social danger of crimes based on national hatred;
- 8) introducing special programs of adaptation and integration of North-Caucasus students;
- 9) introducing specialists in residence halls for educational work with international students and students from other towns;

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<sup>15</sup> Intercultural Education in the European Context: Analysis of Selected European Curricula / Sasa Puzic, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb. – Metodika 15 (2008). – p.390-407.

<sup>16</sup> Prevention of extremism and nationalism among youth. Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy in Tula region. [http://www.dstm71.ru/activity/youth/prevention-of-drug-abuse-and-anti-social-phenomena-in-youth/prevention-of-extremism-and-nationalism-in-youth/?page\\_id=id\\_521](http://www.dstm71.ru/activity/youth/prevention-of-drug-abuse-and-anti-social-phenomena-in-youth/prevention-of-extremism-and-nationalism-in-youth/?page_id=id_521)



10) creating volunteer international groups for prevention of ethnic conflicts on campuses.

The drawback of the cited document is the following. Although the document states that the program should start in secondary school (ex.: “main attention should be focused on the special social and psychological situation in the life of every person which is characteristic of **ages 14-22**”), the recommendations are not directly related to high schools and no practical measures of prevention of nationalism in schools are indicated. Additionally, one of the aims of preventing extremism among youth is creating conditions for the development of a “**tolerant personality**”, but there are no recommendations on how to achieve this aim.

Therefore, there is a certain policy gap when we consider teaching tolerance in schools and developing recommendations for prevention of nationalism and xenophobia in the 14-17 age bracket. In the subject-object interaction model of prevention of extremism described in “Recommendations...”, the gap would fall into the subject category “personality effect” and the object category “youth in general”. That is why it is necessary to develop policy recommendations for schools that will aim at “development of a tolerant personality,” which is one of the goals of intercultural education (according to Nieke<sup>17</sup>).

Governor’s Decree #430 (May 4, 2011) approves “The complex action plan on harmonization of interethnic relations in Tula Oblast in 2011-2012”, which includes a section on teaching tolerance culture through the educational system. This section consists of three types of measures:

- Integration (3.2 – interethnic summer camp, 3.4 – ongoing measures for psychological, social, language and cultural integration, 3.10 – monitoring).
- Cultural awareness (3.1 and 3.3 – regional festivals, 3.11 – content integrated lessons and lectures, 3.12 – information billboards, 3.13 – introduction of interethnic issues into the curriculum in collaboration with government officials, police body, Ministry of Justice).
- Teacher-training (3.5 – teacher-training course “Adaptation of a child in a multicultural social environment”, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 – development of methodological materials for psychologists, special course and seminars for psychologists, youth advisors and school administrators).

This action plan will be reviewed and compared with Polish practice.

### **3. Polish experience in intercultural education**

The issue of overcoming nationalism and xenophobia through intercultural education is topical in Poland too, especially after Poland’s accession to the European Union in 2004 “when cultural and ethnic divisions became more pronounced“ (Dorota Mihulka, 2008). According to a study conducted

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<sup>17</sup> Intercultural Education in the European Context: Analysis of Selected European Curricula / Sasa Puzic, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb. – Metodika 15 (2008). – p.390-407.

in 2008<sup>18</sup>, “it is expected that Polish society will have transformed from a homogenous to a multiethnic and multicultural one by the year 2020“. According to the European Values Study (EVS) of 1999\2000[9], Polish respondents “feel most detached from immigrants (24%). Poland is also near the end of the list when it comes to tolerance towards members of other races (17%) and Muslims (24%)” [see footnote 18]. At the same time, some positive tendencies are clear. According to a 2007 study by the Centre for Public Opinion Studies (CBOS) [see footnote 18], aversion to other nations in Poland has noticeably decreased since 1993 (Roma – from 75% to 59%, Russians – from 56% to 46%, Germans – from 53% to 39%, etc.).

Further positive changes have been forced by legal amendments. In 2010, an antidiscrimination law was introduced in Poland, which was meant to make the Polish legal system compliant with equal treatment regulations required by the EU. Additionally, in 2010, a new article was introduced into the Polish Education System Act, which allows schools to hire teaching assistants who know the language of non-Polish speaking students and can serve, for example, as mediators between parents and teachers, as academic advisors, consultants or interpreters for migrant students. It is important that this is not just a local initiative, but a change in the federal law that impacts on the entire educational system. This change is significant for the issue of tolerance in the education system, because it gives support to immigrants and is aimed at smoothing the integration process for all the sides involved.

In order to develop recommendations for introducing intercultural education in Tula Oblast, Russia, I have provided some examples of initiatives that are implemented by non-governmental and public institutions in the capital of Poland, and which aim to develop tolerant attitudes among youth. I have focused on three main areas of activities: 1. Integration, 2. Cultural awareness and acceptance of differences, and 3. Teacher training.

### **3.1 Integration and NGOs’ work**

The Office for Education in the City of Warsaw supports schools in developing antidiscrimination and integration strategies.

*Welcome pack in migrants’ languages.* This brochure contains information on the school timetable, important vocabulary items, school rules, emergency contacts, examples of school documentation, etc. This is a simple but important step to smooth the integration process.

*Artistic projects.* The Association of Culture Practitioners has been running an educational program for youth in public schools, which aims to integrate Polish and Chechen youth through artistic and educational activities. Their approach is very grassroots based. Youths participate in a joint artistic project and get to know one another. At the same time, workshops for all the school staff are conducted, in the course of which participants are educated about the cultural differences of students of

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<sup>18</sup> Dorota Mihulka. Tolerance or Acceptance – Ethnic Attitudes in Contemporary Poland: An Analysis of Empirical Studies. - Krosno State College, Krosno, Poland. - Presented at the 17th Annual Convention of the Global Awareness Society International, May 2008, San Francisco, CA, USA - <http://orgs.bloomu.edu/gasi/Proceedings%20PDFs/Mihulka.pdf>

different nationalities. This bilateral approach helps to smooth the integration process. Supervision and evaluation is formative and summative and is done by an external expert, which adds to the efficiency and objectiveness of the project.

*Complex approach.* The “Survival” Foundation has conducted a long-term integration project in a region where the level of xenophobia and intolerance was rather high, judging by political speeches, online discourse and criminal cases. All five schools of a small town on the border with Belarus were involved in an antidiscrimination and tolerance education course. At the same time ‘cultural days’ were conducted in the town’s main square for citizens with a photo exhibition, national food festival, national performances and workshops for schoolchildren. An important characteristic of their practice is schoolchildren’s participation: groups of school children go from tent to tent learning different aspects of other cultures.

*Creating a ‘multicultural’ library.* Collaboration with NGOs helps provide schools with specific materials on intercultural education (DVDs, CDs, books). Thus teachers have an open access ‘cultural library’ and a consultant who helps them find appropriate ways to overcome cultural differences.

### **3.2 Cultural awareness and acceptance of differences in school work**

Multicultural education encompasses five dimensions as conceptualized by the American specialist on multicultural education, James Banks:<sup>19</sup> content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Successful examples of implementation of these principles are described below. It is important to note here that these activities are carried out based on the interest and initiative of individuals in schools. There is no national or regional action plan, strategy or any other formal document in Poland that requires schools to carry out such activities.

*Interdisciplinary projects.* One of the junior high schools in Warsaw is famous for its interdisciplinary projects that promote values of tolerance and cultural and ethnic diversity in the school community. Several teams consisting of pupils from different classes of different ethnicity work on separate aspects of the same topic. The topic is different every year, but is always related to diversity and tolerance issues (Polish minorities, Diversity that enriches us, Polish rural areas, towns and cities, India – the homeland of our patron, History, Culture, Traditions of ... etc.).

*School contests.* Another project is a school newspaper on cultural diversity, during the course of which students have to interact with their classmates from other countries, conduct interviews, write articles, translate one word into many languages, etc. It is important for young children to have something material as a reminder (a badge “Different together”, a key chain, a timetable sheet).

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<sup>19</sup> Equity Pedagogy: An Essential Component of Multicultural Education / Cherry A. McGee Banks, James A. Banks// Theory into Practice, Vol. 34, No. 3, Culturally Relevant Teaching (Summer, 1995), pp.152-158. - Taylor & Francis, Ltd. - URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476634> (Accessed: 01/11/2010 07:08)

*School environment.* In some schools you can see drawings by Chechen or Caucasus pupils, national flags and pictures of other countries. This creates a multicultural environment and indirectly educates students in diversity. Billboards are one of the ways to create such an environment, but it is vital that they are appealing to teenagers and not just filled with black-and-white print-outs about punishment for extremist activity.

*Content integration.* One of the Polish examples is reading lessons by means of cultural films with captions. The importance of teaching tolerance through content integration is emphasized by Doctor Kaganovich: “Content of different subjects, especially foreign language, as well as literature and art, where the esthetic image system influences the values and the emotional side of personality directly and strongly, provides multiple opportunities for addressing the problem of tolerance”<sup>20</sup>.

### **3.3 Teacher-training**

The Warsaw Centre for Innovation in Education and Trainings (WCIES) is an institution responsible for supporting schools, curriculum development and teacher training in the municipality of Warsaw. They run educational programs and offer on-going counseling and support to teachers and schools. Below is the list of WCIES teacher-training arrangements that may be relevant to Russia.

*Teacher-training courses are done in blocks by different specialists.* In a course on tolerance and cultural issues, this is particularly justified as psychological, cultural, legal and methodological aspects should be taken into consideration.

*A practical workshop is the best way to educate teachers on cultural and tolerance issues.* In Russian teacher-training and development practice, seminars and lectures are still the most common ways of conducting courses - these create a certain gap between theory and practice and don't allow participants to directly learn 'how to' guidelines.

*Polish officials invite highly-qualified trainers to conduct workshops.* An important legislative arrangement in Poland is that 1% of the income tax on teachers' salaries goes on teacher-training and professional development. This allows the Education Office to provide teachers with methodological materials and qualified trainers.

*Polish officials cooperate with NGOs.* Coming back to the strategic document “The complex action plan on harmonization of interethnic relations in Tula Oblast in 2011-2012”, we can see that the focus is on cooperation with police structures, which can provide the legal (prescriptive) view on the problem. NGOs interested in multicultural issues, on the other hand, usually have “cultural experts” (i.e. representatives of different cultures) on their teams who can give an inner (instructive) view on the problem and suggest relevant solutions.

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<sup>20</sup> Ways of forming cultural consciousness in the Russian school/ S.L.Kaganovich // Intercultural dialogue. <http://www.tolz.ru/library/?de=0&id=393>

*The courses are non-obligatory for teachers.* This practice would not work very well in Russia, because there are already obligatory teacher-training courses every five years, so it would be best to combine tolerance courses with an obligatory component so as not to overload teachers.

*There are special courses for P.E. teachers and supervising teachers* (who can be teachers of any subjects). In Tula, more emphasis is laid on psychologists and youth consultants working in schools, although teachers of all subjects need a tolerance-related training course as children spend most of their time in school not with psychologists or youth consultants but with subject teachers.

*Officials collaborate with the school administration to explain the necessity of such trainings.* This is very important when the training and development process is encouraged within the school system and the administration does not object to it.

In summary, the activities and experiences of Polish non-governmental organizations and public administration in the field of intercultural education can be helpful for work in Russia. The Polish specialists I interviewed indicated several specific strategies for the success of intercultural education. These are:

- Cooperation with NGOs
- Non-obligatory character of teacher-training activities
- Direct contact with representatives of different cultures during workshops or joint projects
- ‘Inner view of the problem’, i.e. participation of representatives of a minority culture in the training activities
- Cumulative effect and complex nature of the training process which should not end after a series of workshops, but instead a practical ongoing consultation service should be provided.
- Projects should be directed at both children and teaching staff.
- Free access to methodological materials on tolerance and cultural issues

If taken into consideration, the above points could help to build good practices of intercultural education in Russian schools. This is especially important in terms of implementation of the educational component of “The complex plan on harmonization of interethnic relations in Tula Oblast in 2011-2012” and achieving the aims of developing a “tolerant personality” stated in “Recommendations for prevention of extremism among youth” within the 14-17 age group.

### **3. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Work with problem youth who demonstrate nationalist activities and behaviors is important. However, intercultural education emphasizes that educational activities aiming to promote tolerance should be aimed at all youth. Such an approach gives a long-term perspective

The best option would be to develop a regional long-term program for tolerance awareness that would include detailed guidelines and measures on integration of citizens with non-Russian background, cultural awareness and teacher-training. The program should also outline which institutions should implement it and how closely and in what ways they should cooperate.

- Teacher-training courses would be more successful if conducted for all teachers, not just psychology and youth experts, in order to prepare the majority of staff working with youth to be able to educate youth as future members of a multicultural society. This approach is important as schoolchildren in general spend much more time with subject teachers than with psychology and youth specialists.
- Teacher training courses should be implemented in collaboration with NGOs, professional trainers and representatives of national diasporas.
- Web-based resources should be available for teachers with lesson plans, ideas for contests, and descriptions in Russian because this would be the cheapest way to spread the information.
- Recommendations for content integration would be more useful if developed for concrete subjects and incorporated into curricula rather than having general recommendations for all teachers.
- Printed educational materials should be distributed in schools free of charge in order to make them highly accessible by teachers and motivate teachers to use them in their lessons and extra-curricular class activities.
- Monitoring of migrant students' achievements would be a plus, as it is one of the most important indicators of their integration process. Special courses and additional lessons can be suggested by teachers and provided freely through the public education system.
- Public funding from the government should be allotted to special support for migrant students in the public education system.
- Consultations on cultural issues for teachers should be available if not in person, then by telephone or online. The Department of Education in cooperation with the Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy should be responsible for finding experts among NGOs or representatives of national diasporas. Now that the latter are developing their website, it is especially relevant to have information about the national diversity of Tula Oblast, including information about current ethnic organizations and national diasporas.
- More multicultural awareness regional activities for schoolchildren should be included into long-term programs developed by the Department of Education and organized by the Department of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy in order to make educational policy more efficient in tackling problems of nationalism, extremism and xenophobia. The

implementation of the program is very important, especially in terms of delegation of duties between these two most important regional bodies dealing with youth.