FORMATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AT MODERN SCHOOL. THE PROBLEMS OF UNDERSTANDING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction
In the modern world education as an institution faces a whole number of problems which may at first sight seem traditional. Such problems include providing equal educational opportunities. The nature of political, social and economic changes, which have taken place in the world and within the former USSR in the last twenty years, increased actuality of national and cultural identity problem in certain regions, shift in the role of religious views in modern states and societies — the whole complex of these factors have an impact on educational sphere. The requirements set to modern school which is nowadays meant to solve a number of new tasks, find new forms of working with the new composition of learners, and interact with the new society. At the same time school has to consider for traditions of the previous times still remaining rather powerful, especially those relating to common social demands to educational system, to understanding of education as a form of culture transmission. In this context, it has become a most vital point to form ability to find ways to mutual understanding, to establish communication adjusted to all forms of new multilateral reality. Modern metropolis reality causes even more perception and acceptance difficulties in different national, cultural and social groups especially if they have just started living in new conditions.

New situation and goals of education
Among multinational and socially diverse population of today's Russia living in difficult life conditions, migrants may be referred to the most problem category. Child migrants are a special social group living in distress related to involuntary resettlement and, therefore, to damage of the established way of life which arouses a feeling of helplessness in them, they feel lack of social behavior experience suitable for new conditions. This often makes a child placed into a new educational environment seek for support in the social and cultural environment which is common for him or similar to it.

It is clear that for the environment receiving migrants one of the main tasks is the need to create conditions for their maximum adaptation, first of all, for adaptation of child migrants. Effective adaptation of child migrants depends on
many factors, in particular attending kindergarten and school by itself shows that the adaptation process has started. School is the main and almost the only general socialization institution, and integration of child migrants mostly takes place in educational institutions. Today the following question sounds quite vital: “Is a modern school ready to solve problems of child migrants?”

It’s commonly known that at school children acquire most important skills (knowledge, relationship models and concepts of social success stages) essential for further efficient social integration and adaptation. The problem of adaptation of child migrants should be addressed in its connection with social cultural environment of the local society and the peculiarities of family interaction. Such holistic approach helps to study this problem in unity of all the factors influencing successful result of children adaptation.

The primary social demand from general education institutions stated in the strategy for Russian education modernization is orientation not only to acquiring by the learner of a certain extent of knowledge but also to development of its personality, cognitive and creative abilities, effective socialization and active adaptation within the social environment. Social adaptation is significant due to the fact that it enables transition from macro level state tasks to micro level which is real life of a person. Thus, the goal of adaptation is related to using the available individual resources according to which the person is forming strategies.

The pedagogic goal of modern school consists in providing maximum adaptation for the school leaver in life. Within the educational context, this means rearing of a thinking personality which will not yield to manipulation, will be responsible for its own choice, characterized by versatile cultural development, creative and socially mobile; this also means upbringing of a person with intellectual potential which will provide for preservation and development within the society. The process of personality formation at school, its social adaptation largely depends on the concept of pedagogic work, nature and organization of social and cultural activity, the extent to which the schoolchildren are involved into it. Social and cultural activity at school is an essential element for integration of a personality into the educational environment. The issue of children’s adaptation to new educational environment in a wide range of migration processes is burning first of all due to goals of their further efficient teaching. Efficient adaptation fosters fast incorporation of the schoolchildren into academic activity which allows solving the problem of preserving the student body which substantially reduces at present for instance, due to demographic problems or internal migration.

Practical importance of education consists in working out and testing of a multilevel optimization program for social and cultural activity aimed at social adaptation of the schoolchildren allowing provision of efficient educational process in accordance with social demand.

Expert opinions reveal two opposite trends in initial behavior of the child migrants at school. On the one hand, they tend to isolate and shrink into themselves limiting their social circle by people of their own nationality on the ground of customs, traditions and moral and ethic standards of their nationality. On the other hand, they are ready to fuse into the environment of their new peers not trying to keep their native language, national and cultural heritage seen as something unwanted in new socio-cultural circumstances.
The situation is aggravated by difficulties related to overcoming a language barrier. Some child migrants have been studying Russian as a foreign language at their national schools, and now it becomes their main language of communication, one of principal ways to adapt to new life conditions. When a child finds himself in a new language environment, this causes psychological stress in him due to which his emotional state becomes negative at once which results in additional obstacles to establishing contacts with his peers.

Substantial difficulties also arise when studying the academic materials. Since the child migrants have to overcome the language barrier, they spend more time on preparing their home tasks as they often come across unknown words and phrases. Their relatives usually are unable to help them as their knowledge of Russian is not perfect either. Most often Russian teachers face mistakes in the word stress made by the children: wrong accentuation, using soft consonants instead of hard ones, etc. Trying to speak Russian fluently, the children slur the word endings and even the whole words. Speech becomes incoherent and difficult for others to understand.

Observation of the requirements to conditions of implementation of the main general education program should provide for educational environment comfortable for the learners and teachers ensuring protection and strengthening of physical, psychological and social health of schoolchildren, high quality of education, which should be available, open and attractive for the children, their parents and the whole society and should also ensure moral and ethic development and upbringing for the children.

The practice of Russian schools shows that in order to help a child migrant to master the academic program, the teachers try to assess the initial level of proficiency in the Russian language on the basis of the level of the child’s general development, special characteristics of his psyche, his character, temperament. In view of these factors, teachers work out individual teaching programs for child migrants. Additional individual lessons are held, tutorials for parents are arranged. Personal glossary for terms and concepts is drawn up where such terms are interpreted in the child’s native language. The child migrants react positively to home tasks in the form of retelling their classmates’ answers to short questions. All these measures do enable forming of algorithms for adaptation of child migrants to academic activity within the new educational environment.

Few teaching aids dwelling on working with children from foreign language and culture families give only most general recommendations like fostering tolerance and taking into account the variety of cultural traditions. Unfortunately, these obscure formulas are of little help to the teacher in his work. At the same time, there are some few but quite distinct factors which the teacher can and should consider while working within the sphere of his/her competence.

Multinational composition of school forms in the RF (Russian Federation) demands the clearest possible understanding of interaction issues in the course of studies. Education should consider national (ethnic) differences and include a variety of types, models and pedagogical value systems adequate to worldview and demands of different ethnic and cultural population groups. Such education is a powerful instrument of forming of a democratic and humane social climate.
The new standard identifies the following competences as the main education results: subject, meta-subject and personal competences which have been developed on the basis of scientific psychology, technologies of their forming and assessment. The need to assess meta-subject competences and personal qualities requires establishment of a national system for result diagnosis within the educational process, and forming and assessment techniques for the stated competences should become the main activity of the school psychologist. In connection with this, the school management system should be modernized: mental health of the children, individual character of educational routes, creation of psychologically safe and convenient educational environment are very important elements in the educational process. Introduction of the new general education standard will substantially change the situation at school upon the whole, setting exactly when and where psychological knowledge should be applied in its different forms and types in the contents and organization of the school educational environment, so that activity of the school psychologist as full participant of the educational process becomes mandatory, specific and assessable. Goals of social adaptation and pedagogic support for migrants are comparatively new for a multiethnic school. Psychologist’s work thus becomes an essential element in the system of educational process management at school as results of his activity include assessment of training quality at school by a number of criteria. Introduction of the stated criteria defines the whole process of modernization in psychological and pedagogic training of educational process participants. The aim of psychological support is creation of social and psychological conditions for development of the children’s personalities and their successful studying.

The ways to perform the following are to be found:
- optimum pedagogic prevention of ethnic and cultural conflicts;
- ways to encourage readiness to effective self-fulfillment in adult world.

According to learner-centered approach to education being applied nowadays, the child’s personality is declared as the main value. It is the personality of the child migrant which needs particular protection. Security of the learner’s personality comprises a relatively stable supersituational self-respect, freedom, feeling that he is wanted and significant at school, the will to show himself favorably; all these components should be supported and stimulated by pedagogic means.

Pedagogic support of the child migrants should be rendered by the following means:
- socio-communicative support is consistent introduction of the culture, language, behavior code of the country of stay.
- Linguistic support and special teaching of subjects means bilingual education (in the language of the majority and the migrants’ language) which help to overcome difficulties while studying the subjects in which the vocabulary consists of words from the predominant language.
- Working with parents when the immigrant families help their children to overcome difficulties in studies and take the main responsibility for their joining the dominating culture, the surrounding multinational and multiethnic environment.

The essential component of the standard is the requirements to implementation results of the basic educational programs representing specific and operationalized education goals. The concept of education results has changed:
the standard is focused not only on subject results as before but also on meta-subject and personal results. One of the reasons for poor academic progress of child migrants is absence of consistent compensatory teaching for immigrants. It has been observed that at schools, where racial, national and cultural peculiarities are being taken into account, the immigrant learners achieve better results than usually. Analysis of situations within the educational process shows that academic progress of immigrant learners increases if their parents take part in discussion of successful studying.

**The problem of information availability and the role of knowledge**

It is known that ignorance generates fear. Absence of necessary information not only makes the modern schoolchild incompetent within the educational environment but also causes discomfort in communication with peers and teachers. In addition to stress due to breaking of the established lifestyle, there is another source of psychological discomfort for the child migrant based on information deprivation. The child lacks in common subjects for communication with his classmates, his behavior is inappropriate as he does not know the rules of staying in a specific society. The system of relations within the learners’ environment is based on the degree of awareness, speed of information acquisition and handling, analysis and transmission to the social environment. Well-informed learners take leading positions and are ready to share information (in the context appropriate for them and their status) with their classmates. In view of this position the newbie/newcomer in the class owning minimum of the information available is at the “bottom” of the social structure of the group which prevents him even more from filling in the information vacuum around him.

The main tasks for educationist community and administration of the educational institution in these conditions is to organize an information environment “friendly” towards the child migrant which is formed by a whole unity of factors (figure 1):

**Figure 1:** Factors influencing the information environment

![Figure 1: Factors influencing the information environment](image-url)
As practice shows, the child migrant is able to accept the formal rules of behavior at school rather fast due to their availability and control over their observance on the part of the administration and the teachers. Execution of such rules by all learners in general is also a substantial factor (violation of the established rules serves as an exception proving the rule validity).

The issue of behavioral factors in informal interaction within the peer group is more complicated. If the child migrant is able to perceive and analyze information quickly, he can adjust to the class structure rather fast, unify the “old-timers” around himself or just fuse into the group and does not stand out. In the absence of such abilities it is more difficult for the child to integrate into the peer environment. In this case he needs help from adults, firstly, the class tutors, as well as school psychological and social services.

Comfortable conditions within the educational environment greatly depend on availability of the academic materials, the teacher’s ability to share his/her knowledge with the learner not only at the lesson but also in the course of extra-curricular activity. The child migrant always has more difficulties in learning the academic material. The reasons include psychological discomfort due to change of school, circle of contacts, etc. Difficulties in adaptation to the new teacher’s manner of material presentation also contribute to that, as well as complicated transition to new educational programs. This problem can be solved in particular by creating of more convenient conditions for the learner’s self-education. Information environment at school shall give such an opportunity to the child. It should be mentioned that a modern teenager has sufficiently developed ICT competencies, so he should receive support in gaining technical skills for information handling only if such support is demanded by the child himself. The teacher’s aim is to organize access to academic material needed, for instance, by placing them in the school educational Internet space.

It often happens that the teacher being very busy cannot find time in the course of educational process for individual communication with his pupil. If the teacher pays no attention to success and problems of the children, they lose motivation to further knowledge improvement. In this situation the solution is properly organized information environment at school. Using such various means of virtual communication as electronic mail, social networks, video conferences, etc., the teacher may at any time convenient for him establish communication within the group or an individual contact with his/her pupils. For example, he/she may answer the questions, give and check the home task, hold an interview, etc.

Applying of modern informational technologies, teaching the pedagogical staff and the learners to use them may substantially speed up information exchange within the educational institution and make the information more available and safe.

The paradigm of the unified school educational environment is convenience in terms of access to information. It is necessary that the teacher or learner being not attached to a certain workplace could find the information needed or share the content created by him/her via any device and at any moment. It is also important to provide an opportunity for joint work according to the following patterns: Learner – Learner, Teacher – Learner, Teacher – Teacher.
The Learner – Learner pattern implies joint work on the given tasks, applying the principles of the learners’ self-government and, as a result, self-organization within the study group. As practice shows, if the children may unite on their own at the time convenient for them to perform any task, the efficiency and quality of their work substantially increase. The main goal of the teacher here is to organize the work in such a way that the learners could do the tasks altogether or in separate groups.

The Teacher – Learner pattern allows to apply the principle of joint work described above including feedback into the process. The teacher may guide and correct the learners’ activity, check the task fulfillment, set new goals and objectives. This pattern is actually the crucial one for organization of educational environment at school.

The Teacher – Teacher pattern actualizes professional and administrative interaction among the teachers. Forming of work plans, reports and standard documentation occurs online and saves the teachers’ time which they may devote to development of their own creative abilities.

Informational space at school should in fact include isolated areas with possible unilateral supervision by:
- school administration;
- teachers;
- learners.

In this regard the educational environment structure may include ICT facilities needed for:
- placing the work plans and documents regulating activity of the administration, teachers, learners;
- preparation and forming of school reports (from the learner to the teacher and from the teacher to the administrator);
- news structure highlighting school activity created by teachers and learners;
- clearly structured electronic document flow with differentiation of access rights for the participants of the educational process;
- groups for communication and experience exchange, setting of goals for the administration, teachers and learners;
- corporate electronic mail for the administration, teachers and learners.

Being an active member of such a structure and having access to the necessary information prepared in advance and clearly structured for him, the child migrant most probably will adapt within this space and will increase his/her comfort level in the educational institution. The burning character of this problem can be seen in the results of the survey held on school basis during which the learners (including migrants) have answered the question on the degree of comfort they feel within the school educational environment (figure 2).
Figure 2: Degree of comfort while studying at school, result of interviewing of the learners

As is clear from the diagram, 18% of the learners feel certain discomfort while studying at EI (educational institution).

We may suppose that a significant percentage of the learners feeling discomfort have difficulties in learning the academic material; they are 29% at our school (figure 3).

Figure 3: Difficulties in learning of the academic material
About 18% of the learners do not feel safe staying at school (figure 4).

**Figure 4:** 18% of the learners do not feel safe staying at school

It is easy to understand that a substantial part of these learners are the children who feel discomfort within the school information space.

The surveys held on the basis of the sample interview of 5-11-year learners has shown that 26% of the learners at our school have arrived from other countries while 74% are born in Russia (figure 5):

**Figure 5:** Countries from which migrant learners have arrived to us
If we learn the information on the culture, traditions and religion of different social and national groups presented in various sources, the problem of its quality and impartial nature, as well as its transmission and perception by the learners, may be solved. For this purpose a feedback principle is applied in the educational environment, in the context of which the child migrants share their experience with their peers, tell them about themselves and thus contribute to forming of safe and comfortable information space. Broadening their outlook the learners understand and therefore accept traditions and peculiarities of other social and national groups, develop their communication culture, become more tolerant to their neighbours on this planet.

Child migrants’ Adaptation at the level of language

Within the conditions when there is no unambiguous position of the government and society towards all aspects of migration phenomenon, the school as an institution has to solve a number of problems on its own. We may reasonably state that not all educational institutions are ready to solve the problem of the child migrant’s adaptation by themselves.

The major adaptation problem is the language. Language incompetence does not allow the child migrants to get into the academic process at once; therefore, the first task is to teach the Russian language to the child as soon as possible. A number of questions arise at this point which should immediately be answered: how, by whom and when is the Russian language to be taught to the child migrants? Not Russian as a school subject, but the very Russian speech! The language like any other complex mechanism may be studied from different points of view, for instance “how it is structured and how it works” or “how it can be used in practice”.

Traditional method of teaching the Russian language at school considers logical and grammatical system of the language as the main subject for studies. The teacher’s and learners’ attention is focused on already prepared knowledge information on the language presented in the form of rules, explanations for them, schemes, models, charts, etc. Experience of a native speaker of the language is the keystone of such studying. The main goal of studying Russian as a foreign language is not to introduce it as a linguistic phenomenon but to learn it in practice as a tool for communication and expression of one’s ideas.

It is evident that the newcoming child migrants should be taught the language according to the special method of Russian as a foreign language (RKI). But methodological support for such teaching work at schools is rather poor at the moment. We cannot use the textbooks that have been compiled by RKI methodologists in our country for many years in the past as they are more often suitable for teaching adults, for instance, foreign students. This means that the basic vocabulary, conversational situations, ways of study material presentation and many other components of the teaching aid do not comply with the special characteristics and demands of the child audience. The teaching aids for national schools (Russian as a second language) are not suitable either as they are not addressed to the children who already speak Russian, i.e. it is implied that they already have some experience in using the language (for example, a Russian-speaking family, the environment, the mass media, etc.).
The newly published Russian textbooks are rather modern and functional, but they are not suitable for the children of foreign migrants which should integrate into the educational process after completing a short language course and are supposed to continue their studies on the same terms as other children in a usual metropolis school. It is evident that development and testing of teaching aids for school-aged children with low competence in the Russian language is one of the most important tasks for the theory and practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language which shall be implemented as soon as possible. We also need a practically oriented program which will allow arrangement of the work with the children of various nationalities in different educational institutions. The main teaching goal for such program is practical learning of oral Russian.

It should be noted that there are some positive results in organizing language support for the child migrants. Since 2000 the courses of advanced (72 and 144 hours) and additional training (600 and 1,200 hours) for philologists are held in Moscow under the program named Method of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language at School. The main aim of these programs is to train the teachers familiar with special features of school education to work with the learners for which Russian is actually a foreign language. As school teachers get acquainted with the major principles of RKI method, they actively and competently put them into practice in a lively form of a school lesson. Practice has shown that no specialist from the outside is able to cope with this task better than an experienced school teacher who has undergone serious special training in this sphere. In this connection the ethnic and cultural component should be included into the education contents in order to prepare and advance qualification of the teachers of Russian and literature and overcome cultural and language barriers in teaching the child migrants and representatives of ethnic minorities.

In the course of teaching, the teachers of Russian and literature should provide for educational and pedagogic interaction between the learners with different traditions, guide them to dialogue of cultures. Taking into account cultural interests of different ethnic and cultural groups suggests that the teacher himself has adjusted to values of other cultures.

One more problem for the child migrants is simultaneous studying the foreign and the Russian (state) language, i.e. the difficulty consists in simultaneous studying of two foreign languages. Acquiring of the skills of correct pronunciation is an essential condition for skill development in all types of speaking activity. Pronunciation skills of the learners may be a) articulatory; b) prosodic (correct word stress); c) tonic. Forming of these three types of pronunciation skills in their interconnection is the main goal of teaching pronunciation. Another goal is to form auditory images of Russian sounds, sounds of the foreign language, the whole worlds, and then on their basis to form the skills of distinguishing words, word phrases, and whole utterances. The third goal is to form the ability of control (pronunciation of other people) and self-control. The fourth goal is to learn the rules of transition from a graphic image of the word to its pronunciation, i.e. reading and writing should be taught at the same time with teaching of phonetic language means.

Starting to solve the problem of language competence of the child migrants, special attention should be paid to the phenomenon of “pedagogic technologies”. The notion of a “pedagogic technology” is broader than the notion of “teaching
method". The technology specifies the best way to reach the teaching goals, the way to manage this process. The technology is aimed at continuous implementation of the teaching process planned in advance. The pedagogic technologies are divided in the following way:

- informational (forming of school knowledge, skills, abilities in different subjects);
- operational (forming of ways of mental efforts);
- emotionally artistic and emotionally ethic (forming the sphere of aesthetic and moral relations);
- self-development technologies (forming of self-governing mechanisms in personality);
- heuristic (development of creative abilities);
- obtained (forming of activity and practical sphere).

By the nature of contents and structure the technologies can be teaching and rearing, secular and religious, general education and professionally oriented, humanitarian and technocratic, different branch, separate subject, as well as monotechnologies, complex (polytechnologies) and interdisciplinary technologies.

The crucial aspect of a pedagogic technology is the child's position in the education process, the attitude towards the child on the part of the adults. Several types of technologies may be differentiated in this respect.

The main technologies allowing overcoming of verbal misunderstanding are learner-centered technologies which focus on the child's personality within the whole educational system, i.e. on providing of convenient, conflict-free and safe conditions of its development, actualization of its innate opportunities. The child's personality is not only the subject according to this technology but also a priority subject; it is the goal of the educational system, not a means to achieve any abstract goal (which is the case in authoritarian and didactics-centered technologies). The learner-centered technologies are characterized by humane and psychotherapeutic orientation and are aimed at multilateral, free and creative development of a child. Within the scope of the learner-centered technologies there can be identified such independent groups as humane and personal technologies, cooperation technologies, and free upbringing technologies.

Cooperation technologies actualize democracy, equality, partnership in subject relations of a teacher and a child. A teacher and learners jointly work out the goals, contents of the lessons, give opinions in the state of cooperation and co-creative work.

Technologies of free upbringing emphasize ensuring freedom of choice for the child and his independence to a greater or lesser extent in his life activity. Making his choice the child actualizes the subject position in the best way achieving the result according to his inner motivation, not according to any outside impact.

**School activity aimed at adaptation of the child migrants**

Taking into account complicated character of the set tasks related to provision of convenient environment for the child migrants and ensuring safe educational space upon the whole which should comply with the principle of considering the interests of all participants of educational activity (learners, teachers, parents), the school forms its own programs and concepts of development which reflect the ideas of multiculturalism, tolerance and social solidarity. Apart from the language
and information support for the migrants, the school should organize a number of events in which not only the child migrants but also their parents take part; it should carry out integrated activity to provide the conditions for interaction among the learners, teachers and parents in the context of introduction to variety of cultures represented within the school space. As an example of this activity, we should specially mention family days annually carried out at school which give an opportunity to representatives of different cultures to communicate the national traditions and customs to the school community. Museum pedagogics plays an important role in this activity: it is realized through organization of Bread museum, Bell museum, and the Right to Peace ethnic and cultural museum. Activity within the context of game pedagogics also gives a lot of positive results; it includes holding of various competitions and games for children and adults, for example, a commonly known KVN (Club for the Cheerful and Resourceful) game which helps to unite in the course of joint performance of creative tasks. Multidisciplinary project activity is widely spread at school; it is aimed at development of understanding that cooperation, tolerance and striving for peace are valuable; the programs for teaching fundamentals of ethics, history of religious cultures, social communication are being realized. Higher educational institutions and the scientific community render great assistance to our school in this activity. For example, our school cooperates with L. S. Vygotsky Psychology Institute of RSUH and MATI Institute of Youth Policy and Social Technologies.

**Conclusion**

To sum it up in brief, successful school work with the child migrants and the activity aimed at provision of equal opportunities for education for representatives of different national and social groups is possible only if a complex program is implemented including all aspects of educational activity, principles of social partnership and forming of moral contents. This work should be characterized by special ability to timely adjust to the changing situation, setting of obtainable goals, high level of professional competence among the specialists, and developed conversational ability.

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