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SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE AS A UNIVERSAL COMPETENCE OF A UNIVERSITY GRADUATE

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Согласно образовательным стандартам нового поколения, у выпускников вузов Беларуси должны быть сформированы группы универсальных, базовых профессиональных и специализированных компетенций. Авторское понимание содержания и структуры социокультурной компетентности позволяет отнести ее к группе универсальных.

Ключевые слова: образовательные стандарты нового поколения, универсальные, базовые профессиональные и специализированные компетенции, социокультурная компетентность, теоретическая модель

According to the educational standards having been developed in Belarus recently, university education should result in three groups of competences acquired by students: universal, basic professional and specialized competences. The author's interpretation of the concept and structure of sociocultural competences makes it possible to consider sociocultural competence to be one of the universal ones.

Keywords: educational standards of the new generation, universal, basic professional and specialized competences, sociocultural competence, theoretical model

The Republic of Belarus pays much attention to the quality of higher education as far as training highly qualified staff lays the foundation of successful development of all spheres of the country's life. A university is one of the major types of higher educational establishments that are to satisfy the society's need in competent specialists and to the full promote the development of students' abilities, their intellectual and creative potential.

The Republic has been making amendments to the legal acts that regulate the functioning, aims and educational achievements, academic process at higher schools, i.e. educational standards, instructional plans,

curricula. In summer 2021 any citizen was welcomed to partake in discussing the pros and cons of the draft educational standards of the new generation published at The Republican Portal of Draft Educational Standards of Higher Education [3]. Improving the quality of the system of education undertaken in the country takes into account the priorities and achievements both in pedagogics and other fields of national science. At the same time, the country is following the European tendency to organize educational process on the basis of competence approach. It means that a university graduate besides being equipped with knowledge, skills and practical experience, should be eager and ready to apply them for achieving the objectives set.

According to the educational standards of the new generation, a university graduate must acquire a set of three groups of competences: *universal, basic professional and specialized competences* (consider different standards at [3]). *Universal competences* reflect the ability to apply basic cultural knowledge and skills, as well as social and personal qualities that meet the demands of the state and the society. It's obvious that universal competences are a melt of comprehensive knowledge, skills, abilities that promote effective management of a number of issues in everyday, professional, social life, thus supporting acceptable conditions for normal human life in a community. For a number of specialities, the list of universal competences is the same, for example Jurisprudence, Business Law, Business Informatics, etc.

Basic professional competences envisage the ability to tackle a number of comprehensive professional tasks related to the respective speciality; thus, their number and lists differ. *Specialized competences* imply the ability to manage a number of specialized professional tasks in the field graduates major in. The list of universal and basic professional competences is specified in respective educational standards, while it is up to higher educational establishments to determine what specialized competences graduates must develop.

The analysis of a number of draft educational standards of the Republic of Belarus has revealed that the set of universal competences to be developed as important educational outcomes of a university graduate (14 in total) includes a number of those that can and should be developed by the means of a foreign language, for example:

Universal competence-3 (УК-3) – to communicate in a foreign language for successful interpersonal and intercultural interaction;

Universal competence-4 (УК-4) – to work as a part of a team, being tolerant to social, ethnic, confessional, cultural and other differences;

Universal competence-7 (УК-7) – to have a sense of humanistic and civic consciousness, patriotism.

The universal competences listed above may be considered the essential features of a broad phenomenon – *sociocultural competence* having been studied by the author of the article. This competence is defined as a person's eagerness, ability and experience to practically apply the set of knowledge and skills that promote rational and tolerant attitude to other person's views and lifestyles, understanding and accepting any person's values and the right for being different, as well as ability to find a meaningful compromise when being a party of intercultural, interpersonal, interconfessional interaction.

This definition means that development of sociocultural competence deals with important changes in students' cognitive system, value-based and behavioural orientations, their world-views, attitude to themselves and to people around; those are obviously changes of a universal character. This point can be proved when considering the theoretical model of the phenomenon having been worked out by the author.

Using modelling as a scientific method and tool, sociocultural phenomenon has been analysed as a system of elements: cognitive, value-based, behavioural, reflexive; these elements are closely interacting and producing a kind of a new integral quality, not typical to any of the elements when considered separately.

Value-based element of sociocultural competence is presented by a set of acquired common human values that have taken the form of value-based orientations and promote a student's eagerness and ability to treat any other person as a unique world. When talking about sociocultural competence, it means understanding and accepting anyone as a sovereign and independent personality on the basis of the "anotherdominance" principle (the term has been introduced by N.B. Krylova [2, c. 45], translated by the author of the article).

The system of values provides the basis for integrity and sustainability of one's personality, determines the world's perception, manages a set of motives that stand behind life strategies in general and every single action, especially in challenging and acute situations [1, c. 798]. Thus, it's an integral element of any universal competence.

Cognitive element consists of two interconnected sets of knowledge. On the one hand, they lay the foundation of cultural, historical, ethnographic, linguistic, sociological, political awareness, showing and proving the world's complexity and multifacetedness as a natural phenomenon; on the other hand they introduce students into the system of patterns to be followed in everyday

interaction and the ways to do it. And this is the way how cognitive element of sociocultural competence is interconnected with the behavioural one.

It should be noted, that much attention is to be paid to comparative studies in the abovementioned fields of knowledge. In this case it will give an opportunity not just to absorb information, but to correctly interpret and accept cultural diversity as an inherent feature of modern communities, as well as to become aware of one's place in global human processes.

Naturally, cognitive element is a part of any competence, but the very essence of the concept "competence" implies that knowledge means little without being reflected in actions. Thus, *behavioural element* interconnected with cognitive and values-based elements is crucially important as it implies that the sets of knowledge and values acquired by a person are followed and applied in every single action, nourishing and transforming one's beingness. It stands behind treating anyone as equally essential and necessitates equality of rights, opinions, views, etc. during joint arrangements in any field of life, including academic and professional.

To reach this objective, the technology of developing sociocultural competence (as one of the universal competences of a university graduate) should offer an opportunity to acquire much practical experience (e.g. what appropriate communicative strategy to choose in different situations, including functioning in multicultural environment, how to avoid conflicts or solve them in a rational and productive way, etc.). And it's another proof for the interconnection of all elements of the competence.

Being an element of the universal competence, *reflexive element* penetrates the other three and is a kind of a force that triggers them. Reflexive element promotes self-actualization and drawing the moral of experience, helps to better understand and make use of one's own potential, as well as to get an accurate image of how others see and understand him / her as a personality, thus becoming a more effective manager of the own life. It is the tool that on the microlevel helps to determine the reasons of obstacles, reconstruct and overcome them, while on the macrolevel it is a mechanism of managing one's development and transforming the environment on a large scale, taking into account the world's diversity.

As it has been stated above, all the elements are closely interconnected. To take actions, a person needs appropriate knowledge, awareness of different phenomena and both reproductive and creative experience; actions rest on certain motives that depend on a complex of inner values; reflection means involvement in the activity to the full as an active subject.

Thus, modelling has given an opportunity to define sociocultural competence as a system of values-based, behavioural, cognitive, reflexive elements which are interconnected, and to consider it one of the universal competences to be developed by a university graduate. The definition and the model presented prove the need for developing sociocultural competence in the context of essential functions of university education, including promoting the culture of peace on the basis of universal common human values, as well as preventing from xenophobic treatment of anyone, without regard of his / her distinctness.

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