

## **Professional Preparation of Future Socionomists for Cross-Cultural Communication in a Multilingual Environment of Higher Education Institutions in Countries of the Danube Region**

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**Abstract:** The article presents an original model for professional preparation of future socionomists for cross-cultural communication in a multilingual environment of higher education institutions in countries of the Danube region. The authors describe the main trends in the internationalization of humanitarian universities. Innovative approaches to formal, non-formal and informal learning of future masters and postgraduate students to use cross-cultural communication skills in multilingual groups are proposed.

**Keywords:** professional preparation; future specialist in socio-economic sphere; cross-cultural communication; social and cultural project

In the context of modernizing the system of professional development of future socionomists (managers of educational institutions, teachers of pre-school, primary, special and alternative education) oriented towards mastering conceptual knowledge in the field of cross-cultural communication, competent choice, testing and comprehensive use of innovative educational technologies in the educational process, it is important to pay special attention to the problem of integration of intellectual and creative resources of teachers and students of higher education institutions in countries of the Danube region for effective interaction and cooperation, productive implementation of multi-scale social and cultural projects.

One of the key aspects for the subjective understanding of the new paradigm of professional activity of modern socionomists in the context of internationalization of educational institutions is understanding the documents developed by international organizations (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action (1994)) and those adopted by the Ukrainian government (the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), the Law of Ukraine "On the Protection of Childhood" (2001), the

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Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), the National Strategy for the Development of Education in Ukraine for 2012–2021)).

In this regard, the benchmarks for the internationalization of university education in the south of the Odessa region are: the scientific substantiation of progressive trends in training future sociologists in a multilingual educational environment; the vector of interpenetration and dialogue of cultures in the academic community of universities; creative approach to and adaptation of foreign technologies for designing a polyethnic university environment.

It should be noted that Izmail State Humanitarian University belongs to the group of Ukraine’s unique cross-border higher education institutions. It is a strategic center dealing with issues related to the implementation of government policies in the sphere of national education. Thus, the process of adaptation and socialization of Ukrainian and foreign students at the university is taking place under unique conditions of the polyethnic environment in the university, on the one hand, and conditions of the polyethnic community of the city of Izmail, on the other hand. Representatives of more than 130 nationalities reside in the Odessa region, about 75 living in Izmail.

Throughout the entire period of studying at the teachers university, students interact not only with their compatriots but with young people from other countries as well. University students are carriers of unique values, worldview, social experience, they speak different languages and have their own fashion style. In this sense, the intercultural dialogue and, at the same time, the mutual complementarity of cultures are the key principles for creating a harmonious, equitable and psychologically safe educational environment in the university.

It is worth mentioning that presently, at Izmail State Humanitarian University, a unique multilingual platform for training sociologists of educational institutions of the Ukrainian Danube region is formed. The platform comprises four faculties:

Faculty of Education (the programs “Primary Education” (inclusive education, English), “Primary Education” (Bulgarian/Romanian));

Faculty of Foreign Languages (the program “Secondary Education: Language and Literature (the English/German/French/Romanian/Bulgarian/Russian literature));

Faculty of Ukrainian Philology and Social Sciences (the programs “Secondary Education: the Ukrainian Language and Literature”, “Philology: the Ukrainian language and Literature. Comparative Linguistics”);

Faculty of Management, Administration and Information Activities (the programs “Documentation and Information Activities” (including English studies), “Economics and Enterprise Management” (including English studies), “Tourism Operations” (including English studies)).

The university carries out international cooperation mainly with higher education institutions of countries of the Danube region, namely: Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Germany. It is a reliable partner in the implementation of strategically important programs and projects initiated by international associations (public organizations, services, cultural institutions). The cooperation is carried out in two formats – in the format of business verbal communication and in the format of distance communication. The latter includes virtual platforms and research networks, namely:

The Youth Public Organization “New European Generation” (a virtual platform for cross-border youth exchange);

“Innovative Instruments for Environmental Analysis in North Western BlackSea Basin (Black Sea E-Eye);

Cross Life-Skills Net, Citizen Engagement in the Prioritization, Design and Implementation of Local Development Policies (SolveNet).

Despite the significant changes associated with organizing an open-type research and academic community in the university, the aspect of preparing future sociologists for cross-cultural communication requires further development. In view of this, the following essential tasks should be solved.

1. The preparation of a person for cross-cultural communication cannot be limited to studying foreign languages. Specific attention should also be paid to such aspects as: mastering speech etiquette by students, their getting acquainted with its distinctive features in countries of the Danube region; acquiring knowledge about national communication styles in student communities; broadening the understanding of the business culture of those countries representatives of which take part in various internship programs and exchange projects.
2. The territorial localization of international cooperation of universities in countries of the Danube region naturally requires organizing conditions to expand the practice of cross-cultural communication of the academic community with other foreign universities that do not belong to this region (as a measure to prevent cross-cultural unification).
3. The active use of the virtual form of international cooperation is not possible without introducing additional programs for preparing the academic community of the university for cross-cultural communication in the distance format.

Works of L.R. Ismagilov (Ismagilov, 2005, p. 28) and A.M. Lyabipov (Lyabipov, 2003, p. 67) present the substantiation of various approaches to the development of multilingual education of students which contributes to their successful socialization in polyethnic environment. However, researchers should focus on the elaboration of educational projects aimed at improvement of training future sociologists (including academic staff of higher education institutions) to carry

out professional activities in a multilingual environment and work in multinational student groups.

We present an original method for designing professional preparation of masters and postgraduate students, which aims to address three strategic tasks of working with the student body, namely:

1. Enlarging knowledge of future teachers about features of the educational systems of the countries represented by students; ethnic values, religious affiliation of the students; specificity of interethnic relations within an academic group (by developing and holding seminars aimed at forming cross-cultural communication skills of teachers);
2. Organizing additional linguodidactic training of future teachers, which contributes to the development of tolerant in terms of communication and planetary thinking educators (by organizing at higher education institutions express language courses integrating the following modules: Module “Intensive Learning of Foreign Languages”, to remove the language barrier (European languages, Turkish, Chinese, and other languages (depending on the composition of groups including foreign students); Module “Etiquette”, allowing to master the speech etiquette of representatives of different nations; Module “Methodology” (development in young teachers of skills and competences to competently use methods for testing language skills of foreign students, the level of language knowledge; creative application of didactic techniques, interactive methods and methods of work in multinational student groups; use of practical techniques for balancing verbal means and multimedia tools for teaching foreign students in academic classes;
3. Introducing cross-cultural training modules (“Image Training”) to improve pedagogical skills of teachers working with multinational groups; training modules for teachers who plan to work in foreign higher education institutions under exchange programs (with participation of foreign teachers).

Particular emphasis should be placed on holding round tables, thematic video lectures for future and practicing teachers of higher education institutions for them to get acquainted with social, educational and personal problems of modern students from different countries; youth movements; student exchange programs; youth music, fashion, preferences, leisure activities, etc.

As an example, we can mention that today our university gives masters, postgraduate students and teachers a unique opportunity to attend foreign language courses; participate in international exchange and internship programs, international competitions; organize festivals and thematic days of the languages and culture of countries of the Danube region as well as other foreign countries.

Furthermore, the study guide “The Fundamentals of Social and Instruction Design” presents the project “Mobilization of University Students to Develop and Support Social and Educational Initiatives in the Odessa Region” (Bila, 2013, p. 205).

At the next stage of our research, we consider it necessary to introduce a structural and functional model for preparing the academic community of the humanitarian university for cross-cultural communication. The model will integrate three components: preparing bachelors, masters, and postgraduate students of the humanitarian university for cross-cultural communication; preparing the academic staff for cross-cultural communication; preparing the administrative staff for cross-cultural communication (Ivanova, 2013, p. 202).

Thus, under conditions of globalization of modern education, future socionomists of Ukrainian educational institutions should be oriented towards formal, non-formal and informal learning to work with pupils and students in a multilingual environment, developing original courses and social and cultural projects.

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