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## Specific Issues of Training Intercultural Mediators for Education in Europe and Russia

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*Ethnic diversity of school students has produced a number of conflict-generators, influencing all the actors of the education process: students, their parents, teachers and administrative staff. The article examines the system of training intercultural mediators in the aspect of development of the multicultural education system and intercultural communication competences. The article presents European and Russian experience of training mediators for the sphere of education. The authors elaborate on the training and accreditation specificity of the mediators in Europe, compare it to the Russian model of mediator training including intercultural mediator training within the Master's programme offered by Siberian Federal University. The interim results of the research project No. 18-013-00528 Mediation Practices in Education for Harmonization of International Relations in a Multicultural Environment supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research are presented.*

*Keywords: intercultural mediators, mediation in education, conflict resolution, school reconciliation services.*

*Research area: pedagogy.*

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### Introduction

Due to the extensive migrating processes faced by Russian system of education, more and more representatives of diverse cultures and nationalities appear in a classroom, challenging teachers to demonstrate a number of special competences including the competence of mediation. This qualification of a modern teacher is an answer to the pedagogical education challenges associated with the training of new

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mediation and teaching specialists, capable of resolving conflicts and relieving tension in the school environment.

Migration processes often trigger collision of cultures, since the stakeholders, teachers and students represent different generations, ethnicities and nationalities with different cultural backgrounds, values and behaviour styles. The youth are often inclined to ultimate and aggressive manifestation of emotions, sometimes extreme; for this reason, conflict resolution through mediation is especially relevant for teachers. Bullying at schools, homework overload, neurotisation along with general physical and mental health problems provoke aggression in young people. According to Evgeny Yamburg (2018), unresolved conflicts and ignored tension at school may drive students to extreme intolerance expressions, such as multiple cases of school drop out due to bullying, suicide attempts, nervous breakdowns, fights and even murders. A massacre in Kerch Polytechnic College, where a student committed a mass shooting of students and teachers in October 2018, may illustrate the fatal consequences of this. Conflicts also occur on the basis of cultural misunderstanding, controversy about national or ethnic traditions and religious beliefs.

An important factor of society diversification is the interregional and international migration in Russia. According to RosStat, the number of arrivals from January to October 2018 (4.07 million people) exceeded the total number of arrivals for the year 2017 (3.95 million people). On the average, 350 people of 10,000 are migrants; the international migration gain exceeded 100 thousand people in 10 months of the year 2018. The main countries of immigration are former CIS countries, such as Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan. Doubtlessly, the active migration processes make an impact on the education environment. Studying at Russian schools but maintaining their original cultural principles, the migrant children suffer from the lack of Russian language skills and have problems with assimilation in the Russian education system. Dealing with non-native learners requires special qualifications of their teachers and certain administrative measures from the school principal. School students population has undergone a significant change during the last ten years and that inevitably causes ethnic or religious tension and conflicts. According to Anton Konovalov, school conflicts may be classified into three levels of interethnic context load: domestic, representational and group conflicts. Various contexts and levels of the interethnic conflicts require different mediation techniques. This is what makes the problem of training and re-training teachers in intercultural mediation so relevant.

## **Theoretical framework**

An answer to the deficit of pedagogical education and intensifying conflict situations in the sphere of education is in the modern conflict reconciliation methods, one of which is known as intercultural mediation. Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 193 On Mediation provides the following definition: “Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution procedure with an assistance of an neutral person – a mediator, fostering the development of partnership relations and formation of business ethics and harmonizing social relationships.”

Due to the long history of intercultural mediation development, the experience of the European Union should be studied. According to the definition provided by the European Union Directive 2008/52, it is a process whereby two or more parties to a dispute attempt by themselves, on a voluntary basis, to reach an agreement on the settlement of their dispute with the assistance of a mediator. This definition is specified in the regulatory documents of some European countries: thus, in France mediation is understood is a process of conflict resolution through formal or informal negotiations with the assistance of a neutral person referred to as a mediator. The Charte de la Médiation Sociale, 2004 interpret Intercultural mediation as “a process of construction or repairing of a social relation and daily conflicts resolution between people/organizations (institutions and migrants) through negotiations carried out by a third party (impartial and independent)”. According to our European colleagues J. Marques, M. do Carmo Vieira da Silva, F. Zannoni, intercultural mediation breaks the ethnocentric narrative of cultural homogeneity, overcomes discrepancies, creates dynamic spaces of critical engagement by individuals and social actors broadening the scope of democratic pluralism, opens the opportunity of negotiations with the civil society institutions. Therefore, mediation is more than a conflict reconciliation technology; it is, first of all, a process of establishment and adjustment of social relations between the conflicting parties for the restoration and development of their relationships in the future.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Europe adopted the experience of American family and school mediation, recognizing the relevance of mediation in the establishment of social relations and disputes resolution. A Uniform Mediation Act was issued in 2002 by the UN General Assembly. At the Brussels Conference (2004), the European Commission approved the European Code of Conduct for Mediators, and the European Union issued a number of directives intended to regulate the mediators’ work. Besides the basic regulatory documents, each European country has its legislative framework to rely on in the sphere of mediation.

In the past decades, intercultural mediation has been actively used in Europe for reconciliation of conflicts and elimination of migrants' discrimination. In accordance to Wieworka M. (2002), intercultural mediation in Europe has been developing under the influence of three main transformation stages of migrants' integration theory and practice. *The first stage* is associated with *assimilation theory* (1950-1970-s). The theory is based on the assumption that the integration difficulties faced by migrants are caused by their own deficits. It means that the migrants need to learn the language, assimilate the values, traditions and customs of the host country. Both migrants and social services need to seek ways to solve communication problems, while the state and the host society, in general, are not obliged to supply any services or mediation opportunities.

At the *second stage*, the *multiculturalism* concept comes to dominate (1970-1990-s). Multiculturalism is based on the principles of tolerance to cultural diversity, protection of minorities and preservation of identity. Such issues are solved by the state to protect cultural diversity through taking certain measures and providing mediation services. The *third stage* is the development *integration theory* and practice defined by positive perception of interculturality (starting from the 1990-s). This approach is based on pluralism, recognition of inevitability of mutual adaptation and integration of both migrants and the host society.

The new EU policy supports integration on the basis of the following principles:

- recognition of diversity;
- recognition of the migrants' contribution into competitiveness and sustainability of economy;
- assurance of social cohesion and respect to human rights.

Some foreign authors (B. Halba, S. Casadei, M. Franceschetti, F. Zannoni) point out the following working principles of an intercultural mediator:

- neutrality and impartiality: the main objective is to respect both parties (host country and migrants);
- dialogue: mediation has no executive power, though it observes all legal regulations;
- free will: at any moment, any party may quit the process;
- governmental support: social and cultural mediation ensures proper function of the governmental social services;
- protection of legal rights: mediation improves social relations, ensuring respect to the basic human rights.

The main obligations of intercultural mediators in Europe include facilitation of integration, professional coaching, assistance in building communication and mutual understanding between migrants and the locals. Functional roles of an intercultural mediator may differ in the European countries:

- social / cultural mediator (France);
- cultural interpreter (Austria);
- sociocultural / intercultural mediator (Portugal);
- integration mediator / family supporter (Germany);
- ethnic minorities health care consultant (the Netherlands);
- linguistic-cultural mediator / social interpreter (Italy).

The Table 1 below shows differences of mediator positions in European countries.

Table 1. Mediator's positions in different EU countries

Mediator is:	Italy	France	Great Britain	Germany	Portugal	Greece
Individual	x	x		x	x	x
Organization			x			
Third party	x	x		x	x	
Institutional structure representative			x	x		
Professional figure	x	x			x	
Volunteer			x	x		x
Migrant	x	x		x	x	
Local citizen			x	x	x	
Translator	x	x		x	x	x
Social worker		x	x	x		

Mediator is a new item in the world of professions. In many countries of Europe, it has not been officially recognized by the state. At NGO and public institutions the intercultural mediation is often performed by migrants language skills but not even familiar with the term *Mediation*: they just help their family members and compatriots. Intercultural mediation and social policy are closely connected to the development of society, work of local associated organizations, local and territorial authority bodies. This profession is expected to be institutionalized all around Europe due to a great demand for such service and the relevance of work performed by volunteers for years.

## **Content Analysis of Intercultural Mediator Training in Europe and Russia**

Despite a great number of academic research dedicated to the mediation development issues of Europe and Russia, intercultural mediator training issues have been understudied. The Russian Foundation for Basic Research project initiated the comparative content analysis of different approaches to mediator training in Russia and Europe.

In Europe, mediation is taught to high school, college and university students (within the peer mediation programmes), teachers, administrative officers and parents. Mediator status or position is confirmed with a certificate, a Bachelor's, Master's or PhD degree depending on the mediation area. The curricula can have common disciplines (e.g., linguistics) or area-specific subjects (in few countries there are specific mediation training courses at colleges due to the novelty of the profession). Mediators are accredited through registration with the competent governmental bodies or professional communities, or, in some cases, a certificate of an accredited course guarantees accreditation of a mediator. In some courses, young and adult learners study together.

In Europe, intercultural mediator training programmes are country-specific. There are three forms of training: vocational training and re-training; University degree in the following spheres: interpreting (France, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Belgium), social science (Italy, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Belgium), mediation (Germany, Poland, Austria); project-targeted training courses (Greece).

Since mediation requires certain skills, training is normally practice-oriented, based on the activity approach. The mediation teaching methods include interactive lectures and discussions, case study, video and real situation analysis, role play. The training forms are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Main forms of intercultural mediator training in Europe

Mediator training	Italy	France	Great Britain	Germany	Portugal	Greece
University degree	x	x		x	x	
Professional re-training	x			x	x	
Standard training courses	x	x		x		x
Validated / accredited courses		x	x		x	
School peer programs			x	x		

Mediator's accreditation and practice are regulated differently in the European countries: candidates need to belong to a certain age group and ethnicity, have no criminal records, languages fluency and possess a sufficient registered capital to start professional practice as a legal entity or an individual service provider. Practicing mediators take regular advanced training courses, update their knowledge and skills.

In the sphere of education, mediation has been developing in Russia for over 15 years as school reconciliation services. Mediation training in Russia is based on the School Mediation method by Tsisana Shamlikashvili who defines the modern education objective as a search for ways of establishing the culture of peace and conciliation.

Under her supervision in 2013, the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Federal Mediation Institute" (FMI) was established with the purpose of carrying out the scientific, practical, educational and experts activities, fundamental and applied research dedicated to mediation problems. In Russia, mediation in education is supported by such open electronic sources as "School Reconciliation Services" by Anton Konovalov, "Mediation in Education", "School Mediation Services" etc.

In Russian education system, the mediation-related training programmes have been implemented at Moscow State University of Psychology and Education (MSUPE), at Siberian, Southern, and Kazan Federal Universities (SibFU, SFedU, KFU), Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University and a number of other universities. However, despite the attempts to deploy systematic Master's programmes, in Russia training of mediators at specialized advanced training courses provided by licensed education centres is still more common.

## **Results**

According to the data provided by the Principal Education Department of the Administration of Krasnoyarsk, during the years 2015-2018, the number of school reconciliation (mediation) services has reached 115 divisions (slight variation is possible: 116 in 2016, 114 in 2018). In the year 2016, there were 498 mediation services at the regional and municipal education institutions, which covers 42% of the total number of secondary and vocational schools. According to the statistics of appeals made to the mediation (reconciliation) services of the Krasnoyarsk Region educational institutions, the most popular issues are peer conflicts (336 appeals in 2015-2016, 266 appeals in 2016-2017 academic year); conflicts between students and parents (54 appeals in 2015-2016, 36 appeals in 2016-2017 academic year).

The results of Krasnoyarsk and the Krasnoyarsk Territory (Krai) look quite humble on Russian scale. It is especially frustrating that many of the reconciliation services have zero statistics of mediation and reconciliation practices: schools prefer resolving conflicts through the traditional authoritarian methods. It actualizes the need for supplying school mediation services with professionals, and organization of systematic advanced training courses for teachers.

According to the Head of Migration Directorate of the Krasnoyarsk Territory Department of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs E. Sidelnikova, in 2018 over 200 thousand of migrants have been registered, which is 7.6 per cent more than last year. The major part of them are labour migrants. The Region has a successful compatriot resettlement and foreign qualified specialists' recruitment programme. Since it has been started, over 12 thousand compatriots living abroad have resettled to the Krasnoyarsk Territory (citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldavia). Among the problems of migrants in Krasnoyarsk making a negative impact on their social well-being besides the basic domestic problems (employment, accommodation), there are social difficulties: Russian language deficiency (22%), adaptation to the new environment (18.7% of the respondents).

The analysis of interethnic relations in the multicultural environment of the Krasnoyarsk Region, carried out within the Russian Foundation for Basic Research project No. 18-013-00528, confirmed the hypothesis of the deficit of mediators in education. It is especially acute for the specialists competent in reconciliation of interethnic conflicts; it is proved by the results of multiple previous sociological researches by R. Rafikov and D. Trufanov (2015-2017), who demonstrated that the positive well-being of migrants is constituted by a combination of social relations, living conditions, social service cost, environment security and low conflictness and criminalization of the community.

To get an expert opinion from the pedagogical community of the city, in 2017 a survey on the evaluation of efficiency of the Siberian Federal University multicultural practices was carried out. It was participated by 400 respondents: school teachers, vocational education institutions and universities, education institution administration officers. To the question: "Do you have any experience of working with students of other ethnicities?" 100% of respondents gave a positive answer. 82% pointed out the need for mediation competence to resolve ethnic conflicts in the school environment. School teachers suggested developing mediation competence through the project methods, international student exchange programmes, intercultural issue awareness discussions,



quest games and advanced training at SibFU. University teachers proposed running seminars with foreign students, dialogue skills development, intercultural case studies, joint projects, using cultural differences in some subject teaching, methodological and research work in practice. It was also suggested to introduce such academic disciplines as History of Religions, National and Regional History, and Ethnic Culture and Lifestyle as elective classes. It was also remarked that training and retraining of teachers in the sphere of intercultural competence is of special importance.

In 2018, School of Education, Psychology and Sociology of Siberian Federal University (SEPS SibFU) opened the first Master's programme in the region titled "Mediation in Education", focused on intercultural context of education conflicts. The purpose of the programme is to train intercultural mediators capable of facilitating socialization and integration of foreign students, assisting in finding their individual learning trajectories and building interpersonal communication with people of various cultural backgrounds, able to mediate intercultural conflicts in the sphere of education. The content of the "Mediation in Education" programme was designed by adopting the experience of European intercultural mediation training. The Master's programme is innovative for being based on the cultural, acmeological, activity theory and competence-based approaches and practice-orientation. Active dialogues and project methods dominate in the learning process. International Youth Summer School provides an opportunity for efficient networking, immerses students into the problematic contexts in active practicing their mediation skills under the supervision of visit professors from Bologna and Lisbon Universities.

The distinctive features of the Master's programme of mediator training at SibFU are:

- 1) It relies on three standards: State Educational Standard 3++, Professional Standard of a Mediator, Professional Standard of an Interethnic and Religious Relations Specialist;
- 2) Digital support of modules, courses and internships of the Master's programme through LMS Moodle;
- 3) Practice-oriented technologies, including real event planning (School Mediation Practice Festival, school supervision, intercultural situation modelling etc.);
- 4) Advanced training courses on various intercultural issues (such as "I am a Russian citizen" civic identity development course, mediation and conflict resolution courses);
- 5) Round tables, conferences, seminars;

6) International Youth Summer School “Intercultural Mediation in Education” as a platform for the first professional experience.

The research activity of the Master’s programme students is done in the multicultural environment of the Federal University and includes joint international researches, academic mobility programmes, participation in international conferences and seminars.

The expert opinion analysis demonstrated that the teachers realize the potential of the multicultural education environment of the Federal University for the professional intercultural mediator training.

The conflict situations that arise during integration into a multicultural society impede, first of all, the security of the environment, which always hurts learners, children or students. Their academic results, psychological well-being and health are affected. By present time, a great step in implementation of the mediation institution in Europe and Russia has been made. The professional activity of an intercultural mediator is intended to prevent and resolve interethnic conflicts, improve mutual understanding and positive relationships between people.

In 2014, a professional standard for mediators was introduced; in 2018, a professional standard of a “Specialist in the sphere of interethnic and religious relations” was approved. In Russia, the implementation of restorative mediation is required by law, though it is not always done in practice. The research of school mediation services’ activity in the Krasnoyarsk Region and other regions of Russia revealed the problem of low application of school mediation due to the lack of professional mediators. The existing models of advanced training of teachers in conflict reconciliation do not satisfy the modern challenges.

## **Conclusions**

The analysis of the research outcomes allowed to confirm the key hypothesis about the need to develop training programs for mediators at all levels of the Russian education system. For designing educational programmes, it is necessary to take into account the positive experience of Russian and foreign models of training mediators.

The importance of practical training is widely recognized in European countries and is an integral part of the mediators training in a number of them (UK, Portugal, Italy). As for the European models of training mediators, it was found that the basic principles underlying the model of training mediators are close relation between

the theory of mediation and the various contexts of its application in practice as well as gaining experience through mediation of real conflicts at schools. It should be emphasized that it is the experience that facilitates mediators' proficiency and development of necessary skills. In our opinion, Russian science lacks empirical study to determine clear requirements for adequate training of mediators.

A second issue of the study is the requirements to the mediators competences at the end of the training program and the potential controversies between the mediator self-evaluation and the assessment procedures and the tools.

One of the goals within the Master's program of the Siberian Federal University is the development of self-esteem, self-reflection on the assets, personal and professional features of mediators. Although the Master's programme Mediation in Education contributes to the development and refinement of skills acquired in basic academic training courses, for continuous professional development the expansion of the boundaries of formal education and access to the real practice of professional mediators is crucial. It is in professional assays that personal and professional perfection and self-awareness is developed.

Mediators need "emotional literacy" (Barker, 2003) and well-balanced temper to recognize and manage the emotions of the parties involved. It is believed that emotional components are inherent in all conflicts. To ensure a systematic analysis of formal marks and self-assessment results, additional research is needed with the focus on personal psychological difficulties in demonstrating neutrality and empathy skills, as well as on the analysis of mediators' feedback on how they are perceived by others.

The conflict resolution requires mediation skills from emotional intelligence – empathy and self-awareness (Schreier, 2001). In this context, the development of self-reflection requires a mediator's ability to conduct "inner self-analysis" without fear and effectively cope with their own and other people's emotions. This requires broadening the module of psychological theory and practice, learning self-assessment, reflection and empathy in the training of mediators. The results of the study demonstrate that training mediators for education should include some mandatory modules to ensure the professional competencies development. In addition, training should be an ongoing process that allows mediators to continue their proficiency regularly.

Harmonization of interethnic relationships in the education environment of such multinational country as Russia requires an established system of intercultural mediators training.

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## **Особенности подготовки поликультурных медиаторов для системы образования в Европе и России**

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*Этническое разнообразие современных школьников способствовало возникновению новых конфликтогенов, отражающихся на всех участниках образовательного процесса: учениках, родителях и педагогах. Объектом данного исследования стала система подготовки педагогов-медиаторов в аспекте поликультурного образования и развития компетенций межэтнического взаимодействия его субъектов. В статье представлен европейский и российский опыт такой подготовки, показывающий ее особенности, специфику аккредитации специалистов данного направления в Европе, а также российские модели профессионального образования, включая обучение поликультурных медиаторов в магистратуре Сибирского федерального университета. Представлены промежуточные результаты научного проекта № 18-013-00528 «Исследование медиативных практик в сфере образования для гармонизации межнациональных отношений в поликультурной среде» при финансовой поддержке Российского фонда фундаментальных исследований.*

*Ключевые слова: поликультурный медиатор, медиация в образовании, урегулирование конфликтов, школьные службы примирения.*

*Научная специальность: 13.00.00 – педагогические науки.*

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