

Analysis of pre-school teachers training in HEI Belarus and Italian multicultural setting

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Abstract

In a globalised world, the school class is the mirror of a changing society. This research aims to identify the readiness of students of the specialty 'Pre-school education' in Belarus and students of the LM Science of Education in Italy to work in a multicultural environment. Comparative analysis of social land in Italy and Belarus, confrontation of curricula and higher education programmes from the standpoint of the tasks of forming linguistic, communicative, ethnocultural and multicultural competencies, and obtained results from the diagnostics of the culture of interethnic interaction allowed us to identify the possibilities of creative extrapolation of the existing positive experience in the national educational systems. The research materials can be used to improve the theory and practice of multicultural education, and the quality of preparation of pedagogical personnel of pre-school profile for work in a heterogeneous educational environment.

Keywords: Intercultural education, multicultural competence.

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1. Introduction

The current transformational processes associated with scientific and technological achievements and with the creation of a global information space led to the formation of a global human civilisation, along with changes in the economic and social structures of the society. Globalisation, as a complex and contradictory process of interactions between many countries and people, is reflected in the political, socioeconomic, informational, environmental and worldview foundations of the world. On the one hand, globalisation seeks to homogenise, standardise and unify different areas of society, and this is seen as a threat to the preservation of national identity, traditional cultural values, etc. (Hajrullai, 2019). On the other hand, it contributes to the interconnection and development of various national institutions, cultures and social systems. Such ambivalence of globalisation processes requires an adequate reaction of social systems. Therefore, in these conditions, intercultural education presumes a balance between world sociocultural experience—the assimilation of which is necessary for the development of civilisation processes—and the preservation of traditional national values in the process of personality formation (Spulber, 2018).

Sociocultural, sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, political–legal and pedagogical factors have a significant impact on the practice of implementing intercultural education in both Belarus and Italy. The concept of multi-perspective general education is the leading global trend, despite the differences in terms of the emergence of a socio-pedagogical phenomenon, such as intercultural education, and in terms of the influence of the above-mentioned factors. This concept does not imply the destruction of existing and functioning educational systems, but ensures their improvement through the introduction of new qualitative characteristics. Intercultural education is becoming the ideological basis of educational systems in many countries of the world. It is carried out based on the aspects of dialogue of cultures, education of tolerance and multilingual education at all levels and levels of education (Palieva & Spulber, 2019).

The most important phase in the development of a personality is the period of pre-school childhood, when the fundamental principles of moral qualities, worldviews, etc., are laid. The importance of pre-school childhood for personality development has led us to focus our research on the system of pre-school education in the analysed countries.

This first segment of education contributes to education and affective, psychomotor, cognitive, moral, religious and social developments of children by promoting the potential of relation, autonomy, creativity and learning, while ensuring effective equality of educational opportunities (Spulber, 2015).

The high-quality implementation of the multicultural orientation of education necessitates educators with a high level of professional competence. However, at present, there is ambiguity in understanding the need for the specialised training of teachers to work in a multicultural educational environment. This environment is characterised by the linguistic, religious, cultural and social heterogeneity of students, and the lack of multicultural components in the content of higher education. Moreover, this contradiction is observed in many national education systems.

Therefore, the results of the study presented in this article are aimed to carry out a comparative pedagogical analysis of the pedagogical staff's preparation on a pre-school profile for work in a multicultural educational environment in the higher education system in Belarus and Italy, to identify their specifics and to determine the possibilities of creative extrapolation of existing positive experience in national educational systems.

An analysis of the practice of training pedagogical personnel of pre-school profile was carried out based on the Higher Educational Institutions of Mozyr State Pedagogical University named after I.P. Shamyakin, Republic of Belarus, also known as MSPU, and the University of Genoa, Italy, also known as UNIGE. The study was attended by students of the specialty 'Pre-school education' of 1–4 full-time

courses of higher education of the Belarusian university and students of the specialty ‘Science of education’ of the Italian university.

Based on the results obtained, a strategy was proposed to optimise the process of forming professional competencies of future teachers of pre-school institutions, taking into account the need for educational activities in a heterogeneous environment (Pogonyshch, Storzhak, Nemchinova & Pogonyshcheva, 2018).

In the minds of many educators and researchers, the term ‘intercultural education’ has a clear associative link with the concept of ‘migration’. Indeed, the theory and practice of multicultural education were born precisely in connection with the need to ensure quality education, guaranteeing the effective socialisation of migrants. However, intercultural education is also solving other essential tasks, which will be discussed later in the example of countries that significantly differ from each other, precisely in the nature of migration processes.

The general historical, ethnogenetic, geographical and confessional factors of development in Belarusian people contributed to the spread of multilingualism in Belarus and ensured the interaction and mutual enrichment of various national cultures. Belarus has a rich historical pedagogical experience in the activity of educational systems with regard to ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversities. Moreover, the presence of tolerance as a mental characteristic is also due to many factors, including the peculiarities of the organisation of upbringing and education of the younger generation.

According to the data of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, in 2019, 94,752,000 people lived in the Republic of Belarus. Based on the statistics of 2009, more than 140 nationalities lived in Belarus, where Belarusians accounted for 83.7% of the total population, Russians for 8.26%, Poles for 3.09%, Ukrainians for 1.67% and Jews for 0.13%, and Armenians, Tatars, Gypsies, Azerbaijanis, Lithuanians, Moldavians, Turkmen, Germans, Georgians, Chinese, Uzbeks, Latvians, Kazakhs, Arabs, Chuvash, etc. (shown in descending order according to the statistics) accounted for less than 0.1% of the total population (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>).

In recent years, migration processes in Belarus have not been carried out so intensively. Statistics on international migration over the past 3 years in the Republic of Belarus are shown in Figure 1.

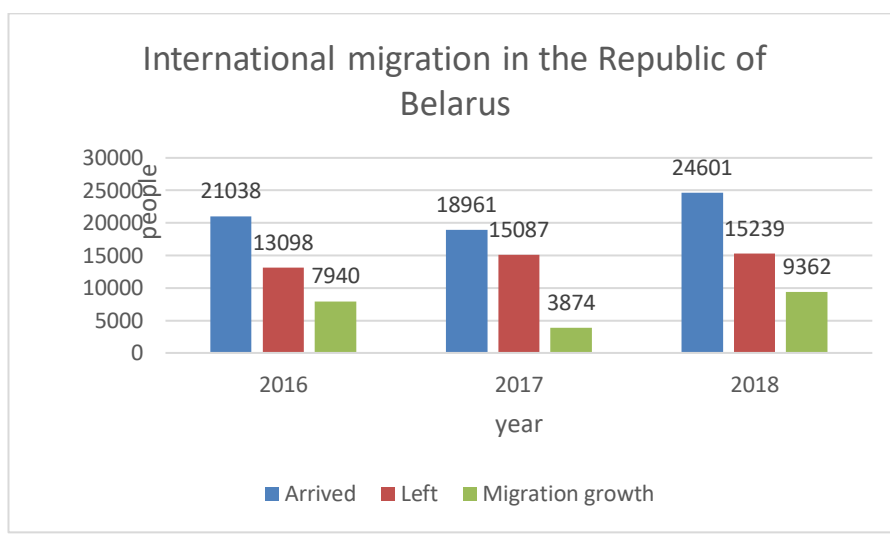


Figure 1. Statistics of international migration in the Republic of Belarus

It should be noted that the results of these statistics take into account, among other things, citizens who arrived to study at educational institutions. It should also be noted that the number of foreign students, only in higher education institutions, amounted to 15,126 in the academic year 2016–2017; 14,635 in 2017–2018 and 15,506 in 2018–2019 (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>).

Of the total number of migrants who arrived in the Republic of Belarus, children aged 0–15 years amounted to 4,058 people in 2016, 3,666 people in 2017 and 4,040 people in 2018.

Italy is a country with a very high population in Europe (60,483,973 people). According to the Italian National Statistical Institute's (ISTAT) data, foreigners residing in Italy as of 1 January 2019 were 5,255,503 and represented 8.7% of the resident population (<http://www.istat.it>).

The difficulties that accompany migration processes, and the consequent need for new forms of coexistence, require a reasonable approach and balance, consistent with the doctrine of human rights. Accordingly, active migration processes are reflected in the education system.

In Italian schools, minors with a non-Italian nationality in 2018 were 841,719, who represented 9.7% of the total pupils. In 2019, the number of non-Italian children increased to 1,163,262 (<https://miur.gov.it/documents/20182/250189/Notiziario+Stranieri+1718.pdf/>). Analysing the dates from 2010 when the numbers of non-Italian minors were 673,800, it is possible to say that the number has twice increased. Table 1 shows the situation of foreign students in Italian schools and how these numbers continue to increase.

Table 1. The weight of the presence of non-Italian pupils in different Italian schools

	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Kindergarten	10.4%	10.7%	11.1%
Primary school	10.6%	10.8%	11.2%
First-level secondary school	9.4%	9.7%	10%
Second-level secondary school	7%	7.1%	7.3%
Total	9.2%	9.4%	9.7%

These figures show the importance to prepare the future educators/teachers to work with a multicultural environment.

An important and compulsory part of intercultural education is the ethnolinguistic component. However, the sociolinguistic situation in the Republic of Belarus is ambiguous. Two languages are recognised as official state languages in the republic: Russian and Belarusian. The national (Belarusian) language is a minority in society, and special measures are being taken by the state to support and develop it, including through the education system. In the Republic of Belarus, educational institutions with both the Russian and Belarusian languages of instruction are currently functioning. There are educational institutions providing training in Polish, Lithuanian and other languages. A compulsory component of training programmes is the study of foreign languages.

As noted earlier, kindergartens with both Belarusian and Russian languages of instruction are currently functioning in the republic. The number of children studying in Belarusian-language pre-school institutions is constantly decreasing. So, if in the 2012 academic year 11.4% of the total number of children studied in the Belarusian-language pre-school, then in 2018 only 9.1% of the children studied in the Belarusian-language pre-schools. It should be noted that Belarusian-language institutions of pre-school education are located mainly in rural areas (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>).

However, in accordance with the State Programme of the Ministry of Education in Belarus, all institutions of pre-school education provide their lessons in both Russian and Belarusian languages. Moreover, interest groups are carried out in kindergartens, such as group work, usually on a paid basis, where 238,000 pre-school children study a foreign language (<http://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/02f/02f0dcce5ea8e20041bca7728366684c.pdf>).

In Italy, there is a different situation, the official language is Italian, except in autonomous regions like Vale D'Aosta (French and Italian) and Provence of Bolzano (German and Italian) it is not compulsory to study both languages.

According to the principle of interactivity laid down in the programme of pre-school education, for both the Republic of Belarus and Italy, it is possible to use multicultural content in various types of activities (cognitive, speech, play, communicative, motor, theatrical, constructive and musical). So, in the content of the programme for each listed activity, the inclusion of individual knowledge and covering the content of various cultures are observed. For example, the programme provides for acquaintance with the works of various types of art from different countries of the world. In addition to the basic component for pre-schoolers, the programme provides for the study of a foreign language from the oldest pre-school age.

The high-quality implementation of the multicultural orientation of education requires educators with a high level of professional competence. Using the results from Dusi, Rodorigo and Aristo (2017), Smolyaninova, Korshunova and Daynenko (2017) studies, we highlight the professional competencies of the teacher of the institution of pre-school education necessary for the implementation of multicultural education: linguistic, communicative, linguo-didactic, ethnocultural and multicultural.

The content of the above-mentioned competencies can be defined as follows:

1. linguistic—knowledge of the languages in which the educational process is implemented in a particular educational institution, as well as a foreign language;
2. communicative—the ability to carry out high-quality professional communication in the languages used in the educational process;
3. linguo-didactic—the ability to use in practice the main provisions of methodological science of parallel teaching of children two or more languages;
4. ethnocultural—the presence of a sum of knowledge about the historical past life, culture, customs and traditions of countries represented in educational programmes, and the presence of a high level of national self-awareness (Nas, 2018)
5. multicultural—a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and personal qualities necessary to build an effective multicultural interaction.

Let us dwell only on one of the competencies that has been less explored till date—multicultural—which can act as a universal human competence based on a common culture (respect, openness, goodwill, ability to conduct dialogue, compassion, acceptance of dissent, etc.) and as an integrative quality personality. The formation of this competency is carried out in educational activities, in the process of teaching practices, in extracurricular scholarly work, as well as in self-determination analogues of these processes. The components of this competency are cognitive, motivational-value and activity.

2. Method

Intercultural education as a reply to a multicultural society became a relevant question for researchers. Currently, there are an increasing number of researches in methodology for intercultural education (Zhang & Zhou, 2019), on intercultural competences (Peng, Zhua & Wu, 2020) and their assessment (Muller et al., 2020).

Our study is based on the methodological approaches which are, from our point of view, the most relevant and proceeds taking into consideration the fact that the object of this study is the theory and practice of intercultural education in both Belarus and Italy. The subject of this study is the process of preparing pedagogical personnel of a pre-school profile for work in a multicultural educational environment in the higher education system of Belarus and Italy.

A theoretical analysis of a wide range of studies in the field of intercultural education allows us to conclude that, at present, determining the components of intercultural education, structural archaism and inconsistency of conceptual constructs can be traced with the realities of time. This, in our opinion, hinders the development of scientific knowledge. The systematic approach that we used in

this study focuses on the consideration of intercultural education as an integrated system with hierarchical and interconnected elements and components.

The structural approach helps us to take into consideration the theory and practice of intercultural education in relation to the external environment, taking into account the influence of sociocultural, sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, political and legal, and pedagogical factors.

The functional approach involves the disclosure of the functional essence of intercultural education and their impact on pedagogical science, educational practice and the sociocultural situations as a whole.

The process approach we have chosen provides a review of the training of pedagogical staff of a pre-school profile for the implementation of intercultural education as a process, the identification of its logic and stages, and the identification of difficulties and contradictions.

The active approach involves the consideration of the subject of research in the aggregate elements, such as goal-setting, content, forms, methods, etc.

From the group of paradigmatic approaches that provide an understanding of intercultural education, we have chosen social stratification and poly-paradigm, and since intercultural education is a multi-valued phenomenon, which is multi-dimensionally integrated into the social system, we have defined them as the leading socio-stratification methodological approach. This approach is based on the ideas of the concept of social stratification of society and the division of society according to certain criteria into special strata. Each stratum develops a specific ideological position, which is determined by social factors and is expressed in the appearance of one or another's pedagogical theory and educational practice (Ozberk & Baskan, 2018).

The poly-paradigmatic approach defines methodological triangulation (i.e., the use of data collected from various sources by various methods and various researchers) and the interpretation of the same object under study by several complementary research paradigms. The use of the poly-paradigm approach is due to the fact that intercultural education is continuously changing, i.e., in the motion process. Therefore, the use of this approach allows us to combine various complimentary research paradigms and consider the studied socio-pedagogical phenomenon from different angles.

As instrumental approaches of a technological nature, which help determine the algorithm for solving research problems and determining the main approaches to the analysis of already acquired scientific knowledge, we have chosen ontological, phenomenological and diversification.

The ontological approach directs us to the study of the fundamental principles of intercultural education, its most general concepts, categories, structure and patterns in development. In the study of the theory and practice of multicultural education in different countries, the ontological approach helps us to trace the way of transforming individual ideas into various forms of knowledge and their subsequent implementation in educational practice in a particular country.

The phenomenological approach determines the intrinsic value of the subjective vision of researchers and practitioners, and studies the individual historical trajectories of the formation and development of individual pedagogical theories and practices while sharing an understanding of the process of the subject under study in science, in the minds of individuals (scientists, educators and public figures) and in everyday consciousness. The phenomenological approach (descriptive, subjective and concretising individual experience) allows us to take into account various points of view in the analysis of such a complex socio-pedagogical phenomenon as multicultural education.

The diversification approach is used to determine and systematise the factors and circumstances that ensure the development of scientific knowledge with the identification of spatial and temporal localisation. The diversification approach aims to study multicultural education in Belarus and Italy, taking into account the influence of diverse factors in micro- and macro-environments in identifying situations that cause causal relationships.

The use of these methodological approaches in complementarity and interconnection allows a comparative pedagogical analysis of the training of pre-school teachers to work in an intercultural educational environment in the higher education system of Belarus and Italy and to determine the possibilities of creative extrapolation of the existing positive experience in national education systems. However, due to the limited volume of publication, not all research methodological approaches are fully illustrated in this work.

This article presents and analyses statistical data characterising the social processes in Belarus and Italy, affecting the development of the theory and practice of multicultural education in general. The comparative characterisation of educational standards, curricula and higher education curricula has been carried out, providing training of specialists, in terms of the formation of their competence to work in a multicultural educational environment.

Thus, based on the generalisation of a wide range of sources in the field of world theory and practice of intercultural education and the application of the above-mentioned methodological approaches, our study is built in accordance with the following steps.

The first step in the study was the analysis and comparison of new statistics, characterising the social processes in Belarus and Italy, affecting the development of the theory and practice of multicultural education in general. The comparative characterisation of educational standards, curricula and higher education curricula has been carried out, providing training of specialists, in terms of the formation of their competence to work in a multicultural educational environment. The analysis of the social land in both countries is mentioned in the introduction and is the basis to reflect on the necessity to investigate the readiness of future teachers to work in a multicultural environment.

The second step was to compare the curricula and programmes of students of the speciality 'Pre-school education' in Belarus and students of the LM Science of Education in Italy that are presented in the educational institutions of MSPU and UNIGE.

In the Republic of Belarus, currently, the training of teachers for the pre-school education system is carried out in 8 higher educational institutions and 17 institutions of secondary specialised education.

In Italy, there are 52 degree courses in 49 higher education institutions, and they are called 'L-19 Scienze dell'educazione e della formazione'. Some universities like UNIGE have two types of degree courses: Science of Education and Training, and Science of Primary Education. In our research, we took into consideration the students of the Science of Primary Education course, as it is the only degree course class that prepares primary school professors and pre-primary school professors.

At MSPU, according to the educational standard, it is compulsory to study a foreign language, which is included in the cycle of general scientific and professional disciplines of the state component with 8 credit units; the language study is provided only in the first year, which subsequently negatively affects the level of proficiency in it. The predominance of a linguo-centric approach, oriented towards analytical and synthetic activity, aimed not at improving communication skills but at understanding the language system in the process of teaching a foreign language, also leads to an insufficient level for its free use in professional activities knowledge of a foreign language.

At UNIGE, in the curricula of Science of Primary Education, foreign language is the English language, and the course is studied for 5 years; the level of student's knowledge at the end of the course should be equated to the B2 level (international assessment level).

At MSPU, certain issues aimed at the formation of the above-mentioned competencies are considered in such disciplines of the state component as 'Pedagogy', 'Preschool Pedagogy' and 'Theory and Methods of the Development of Speech of Preschool Children', and within the framework of the intra-university component, such disciplines are taught as 'The Culture of Speech' and 'Speech and Speech Communication of Pre-schoolers'.

At UNIGE, courses in Intercultural Education and the formation of ethnocultural competencies have a special place and the courses that are carried out for this purpose are intercultural education (discipline and laboratory), game and animation methodology (discipline + laboratory), and laboratory of Italian Language for foreigners

Ethnocultural competence develops among future teachers of pre-school education institutions in academic disciplines, such as 'History of Belarus (in the context of European civilisation)', 'Political science', 'Fundamentals of the ideology of the Belarussian state', 'Local history work in pre-school institutions' and 'World and domestic children's literature'.

The curriculum of educational disciplines aimed at mastering the methodology for the development of speech in pre-school children does not sufficiently address the issues of parallel mastery of several languages and the specifics of not teaching children in their first language.

Thus, an analysis of existing programmes, in our opinion, showed an insufficient presence in the content of education of topics related to problems of intercultural education, and in the context of all competencies: linguistic, communicative, linguo-didactic, ethnocultural and multicultural, which indicate the need to change the subject content of vocational training teaching staff of pre-school profile in Belarus. While in Italy the formation of intercultural skills has an important place in the degree curriculum.

The third step was the analyse the level of culture of interethnic interaction among students of the pre-school education degree course at MSPU and among the students in Science of Primary Education degree course at UNIGE.

To determine the level of culture of interethnic interaction among students, we carried out diagnostics according to the method of Shablyuk. This methodology was designed to elucidate the attitude of students towards representatives of other nationalities who find themselves in the situation of forced migration and is based on assessing the degree of agreement with the proposed statements. The questionnaire consists of 28 statements in which it is possible to answer by indicating 1–5 levels of reply, from totally agree to totally disagree. Respondents evaluated the degree of agreement with the indicated statements. Shablyuk provided a scale of results elaborating that each question has a different score from 1 to 5 or vice versa. According to the number of points scored, the following levels of psychological culture formation in international interaction among students can be distinguished:

- 0–34 points—the lowest level
- 35–69 points-average level
- 70–104 points-sufficient level
- 105–138 points—high level

The research sample consisted of a total of 210 students, 91 students from the MSPU and 109 students from UNIGE. The age range of Belarussian students was 18–22. The age range of Italian students was 18–44. This age difference can be explained by the different educational systems in Italy and Belarus. The principle of construction sample was the university courses' profiles and not age.

3. Results


The diagnosis according to the method of Shablyuk was attended by 91 students of 1–4 full-time higher education in the speciality 'Pre-school education'. The results showed that most students have a sufficient level of formation of the psychological culture of intercultural interaction (52.7%, 48 people). In 41 students (45.1%), the answers correspond to a sufficient level of formation of the diagnosed characteristics.


In Italy, we interviewed 109 students attending the course's degree in Primary Education. According to the number of points scored, the following levels of psychological culture formation in intercultural

interaction among students have distinguished how 97%: of students show a very high level and 3% of the interviewed students show a sufficient level of psychological culture formation in international interaction.

Table 2. Diagnostic results of the level of formation of the culture of interethnic interaction

Age group	Low level		Average level		Sufficient level		High level	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1st	0	0	0	0	18.5	0	81.5	100
2nd	0	0	3.8%	0	42.3	2	53.8	98
3th	0	0	6.3%	0	56.3	1	37.5	99
4th	0	0		0	72.7	0	27.3	100

 Data from Mozyr State Pedagogical University named after I. P. Shamyakin.

 Data from the University of Genoa.

Particularly interesting is the results of diagnostics regarding the comparison of data in the context of training courses. So, in the educational institution of the MSPU, the first-year students showed the highest results. There is a gradual decrease in the percentage of respondents who, according to the results of the survey, demonstrate a high level of formation of a culture of interethnic interaction by the fourth year. Note that this technique is based on self-esteem; therefore, to clarify and interpret the fact obtained, we used an additional individual conversation. In the course of this conversation, it was found that how senior students are more thoughtful and serious about the problem of interethnic interaction and have a more clear-cut position and attitude towards people who are in a forced migration situation. Senior students often give examples of their personal experience with migrants, which is not always positive.

Comparing the two samples according to Shablyuk’s questionnaire, responses show a big difference between the Balorussian sample and the Italian sample.

High level of ‘psychological culture to international interaction’ was 98% in the Italian sample and 52.02% in the Belarusian sample

Sufficient level of ‘psychological culture to international interaction’ in the Italian sample was 2% and 47.45% in the Belarusian sample;

The average level of ‘psychological culture to international interaction’ in the Italian sample was 0% and 2.52% in Belarusian sample

None of the samples had a low level ‘psychological culture to international interaction’.

The Italian sample shows a high-level psychological predisposition to intercultural interaction. We can see from the results that 98% of the students obtained a high level of psychological culture to international interactions.

The average age can explain the difference between the Belarusian sample and the Italian sample: Italian students are more mature, as the age range in the Italian sample is 18–44. The other explanation can be the historical experience with regard to immigration in the country.

Italy has a longer experience in the migration process than Belarussia, and this fact permitted us to develop a culture of reception and to adapt the behaviour to the presence of non-native people. As stated by Amoretti (2018), the perception of migrants that the welcoming population creates is the result of a sum of different stereotypes which, once generalised, define any person belonging to a different group in terms of the distance from the characteristics of judging group. These stereotypes need time to be confirmed or not, to be changed and to be assimilated. The time factor in a country's immigration experience is critical to the ‘acceptance of other cultures’. Knowing the other interacting with representatives of other culture requires time to understand the culture and the tradition of each other.

In the migration process, foreigners are first perceived as a threat, leading towards the loss of national identity. This threat can be reduced only through knowledge and through human interaction.

Another point is, in order to accept other cultures, the population should have strong knowledge about their own culture.

Moreover, national identity also needs time to be formed and empowered. With regard to the Republic of Belarus, it is possible to speak about their national identity only after 1999. Twenty-one years are not enough to validate their national identity. However, this is not the case with Italy, as the Italian national identity was developed and confirmed since 1,861, the year of Italian unification.

The analysis of the results for individual statements that received positive answers in the context of training courses is presented in Table 2. The responses are summarised as ‘fully agree’, ‘largely agree’ and ‘partially agree’.

It is possible to note that in the controversial replies of the Belarusian sample, 78.9% feel reasonable with representatives of other culture who are forced to leave their homes, and at the same time 42% agree with the statement ‘Refugees cannot have the same rights and freedoms as the indigenous population’ and 22.4% consider that ‘Refugees are Potential Offenders and Intruders.’

Another controversy is the fact that 74.7% are committed to the dialogue of cultures and at the same time 42.3% agree with the statement ‘Wary of the foreigner.’

Table 3. Claims that received a positive answer (based on the diagnostics results at Mozyr State Pedagogical University and at University of Genoa

Statements received a positive response	BY	IT
If the opportunity presents itself, I will leave the border of my country	82.3%	52%
I am ok with representatives of other nationalities who are forced to leave their homes	78.9	100%
Wary of a foreigner	42.3	1.6%
I tolerate representatives of other nationalities	93.2	98%
I do not like representatives of other cultures	23.6	0.6%
Refugees are potential offenders and intruders	22.4	1%
I would like to know more about the features of the life of other nationalities	92.7	99%
Refugees pose a threat to the security of our country	23.6	1%
Refugees cannot have the same rights and freedoms as the indigenous population	42%	0.7%
I am committed to the dialogue of cultures	74.7	100%

All this controversy is even more jarring when compared to the Italian sample that is 100% reasonable with representatives of other nationalities who are forced to leave their homes and are committed to the dialogue of cultures. Only 1.6% of the Italian sample agrees with the statement ‘Wary of a foreigner’, 1% of the Italian sample agrees with statements ‘Refugees are Potential Offenders and Intruders’ and ‘Refugees pose a threat to the security of our country’, and 0.6% and 0.7% agree with the statements ‘I do not like representatives of other cultures’ and ‘Refugees cannot have the same rights and freedoms as the indigenous population’, respectively. In the meantime, 98% of the Italian sample agree with the statement ‘I tolerate representatives of other nationalities’.

The consistency of the Italian sample replies is due to the fact that the notion of immigrant/foreigner or notion of refugees is used often when the social issues are approached. The incongruity of the Belarusian sample can be explained by the fact that due to such a short time on nation independence there can be confusion in using the terminology like refugees and foreigner. About 92.7% of the Belarusian sample agrees with the statement ‘I would like to know more about the features of the life of other nationalities’, which indicates the willingness of future educators to know

more about other cultures, and this fact is a fertile design to carry out intercultural competences or intercultural readiness.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study allows us to draw the following conclusions.

In Belarus and Italy, the development of the theory and practice of intercultural education is subject to the influence of various factors. These factors can be divided into two interrelated and mutually affecting groups: factors related to the history of the development of a particular state and nation (general historical, ethnogenetic, geographical and confessional), and currently active (sociocultural, sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, political and legal and pedagogical).

Fundamental differences are associated primarily with migration processes. Belarus is characterised by relative ethnic homogeneity and low migration balances. Italy, on the contrary, is characterised as a country with a very high migration growth. Therefore, the educational system in Italy is more focused on the implementation of the concept of intercultural education and has more experience in its implementation.

However, at present, the concept of intercultural education is considered somewhat broader than 'education for migrants,' as it is aimed at expanding targeted, organisational and substantive perspectives related to the need to ensure that the younger generation is prepared to live in a globalised world, while preserving national specificity and traditional values. Hence, at present, in many countries of the world, there is a tendency to orient intercultural education towards the concept of multi-perspective general education, i.e., this system includes educational institutions at all levels and levels of education.

The effectiveness of intercultural education depends primarily on the professionalism of the teaching staff. A comparative analysis of curricula and training programmes for pre-school teachers in higher education institutions in Belarus and Italy, with a view to providing meaningful support for the formation of forming linguistic, communicative, lingual-didactic, ethnocultural and multicultural competencies, showed an insufficient presence of topics that ensure the formation of these competencies in programmes, implemented in the Republic of Belarus. This is reflected in the results of a diagnostic study. The level of psychological culture of interethnic interaction among Belarusian students is lower than that of Italian students. In our opinion, such results are determined not only by the content of education but also by the personal experience of interethnic communication, stereotyped attitudes, etc.

Training future educators and teachers to be prepared for multicultural classes is important. The analysis of two samples permits us to underline the importance of a country's system and the degree curricula. The Italian sample shows more readiness to work in a multicultural environment in comparison with the Belarusian sample first because of a country's system with a long history and consequently with an empowered national or cultural identity and because of the fact that the degree curricula of intercultural education has an important weightage.

In our opinion, the logical sequence of increasing the level of multicultural competence of pedagogical personnel is to move from the development of general social and psychological aspects of intercultural interaction to the ability to correctly implement it in professional–pedagogical activity and in the intercultural education and training of children.

5. Recommendations

Highlighting the dominant trends in the content and nature of the theoretical and practical training of pre-school specialists in Belarus and Italy allows us to identify different ways to improve the activities of higher education institutions aimed at creating the willingness of pre-school teachers' institutions

to implement intercultural education and training of children. In order to train pedagogical staff capable of providing intercultural education, it is necessary to change the linguo-centric approach to language learning in a personality-oriented way, increase the share of national and multicultural components in the content of teacher education and introduce a special educational discipline 'Theory and Methodology of Intercultural Education' in higher education institutions aimed at forming pedagogical shots of pre-school profile. This conclusion is a theoretical assumption and requires experimental confirmation (Bartek & Nocar, 2018).

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