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The Role of Multicultural Education in Educational Cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia

Azerbaycan ve Rusya Arasındaki Eğitim İş Birliğinde Çokkültürlü Eğitimin Rolü

Abstract

This study examines the role of multicultural education in educational cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. It conceptualizes multicultural education as an inclusive pedagogical approach that promotes equal educational opportunities, intercultural understanding, social cohesion, and respect for cultural diversity. The study analyzes the theoretical foundations of multicultural education and their relevance to the Azerbaijani educational context, with particular attention to the development of multiculturalism-related courses in higher education. It also examines the development of Azerbaijan–Russia educational cooperation, focusing on academic mobility, student and academic exchanges, institutional cooperation, joint scientific activities, and the internationalization of higher education. A qualitative research design is employed, combining a historical-chronological approach with document analysis and thematic analysis of scholarly and institutional sources. The findings indicate that multicultural education provides an important conceptual and institutional basis for strengthening intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding within bilateral educational relations. The study further demonstrates that academic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia facilitates the exchange of educational and cultural experiences and contributes to the international promotion of multicultural values. Thus, multicultural education and bilateral academic cooperation represent complementary mechanisms for supporting inclusive education, intercultural dialogue, and international academic integration.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Russia, multiculturalism, multicultural education, educational cooperation

Öz

Bu çalışma, Azerbaycan ile Rusya Federasyonu arasındaki eğitim iş birliğinde çokkültürlü eğitimin rolünü incelemektedir. Çokkültürlü eğitim, eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini, kültürlerarası anlayışı, toplumsal bütünleşmeyi ve kültürel çeşitliliğe saygıyı destekleyen kapsayıcı bir pedagojik yaklaşım olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışmada çokkültürlü eğitimin kuramsal

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temelleri ve bunların Azerbaycan eğitim sistemi açısından taşıdığı önem, özellikle yükseköğretimde çokkültürlülükle ilgili derslerin geliştirilmesine odaklanılarak incelenmiştir. Ayrıca Azerbaycan-Rusya eğitim iş birliğinin gelişimi; akademik hareketlilik, öğrenci ve akademik personel değişimleri, kurumsal iş birliği, ortak bilimsel faaliyetler ve yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmada nitel bir yöntem benimsenmiş; tarihsel-kronolojik yaklaşım, doküman analizi ve bilimsel ve kurumsal kaynakların tematik analizi birlikte kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, çokkültürlü eğitimin ikili eğitim ilişkilerinde kültürlerarası diyalogun ve karşılıklı anlayışın güçlendirilmesi için önemli bir kurumsal ve kurumsal temel oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca Azerbaycan ve Rusya arasındaki akademik iş birliğinin eğitimsel ve kültürel deneyimlerin paylaşılmasına ve çokkültürlü değerlerin uluslararası düzeyde yaygınlaştırılmasına katkı sağladığı görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, çokkültürlü eğitim ile ikili akademik iş birliği; kapsayıcı eğitimin, kültürlerarası diyalogun ve uluslararası akademik bütünleşmenin desteklenmesinde birbirini tamamlayan mekanizmalar olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Azerbaycan, Rusya, çokkültürlülük, çokkültürlü eğitim, eğitim iş birliği*

Introduction

There are numerous ethnic-cultural groups around the world, and their living with equal opportunities and social well-being is of particular importance for the development of international relations. The main reasons for the emergence of ethnic diversity include factors such as globalization, the increase in migration processes, the interaction of cultures, and others (Ahadova, 2014). Thus, various societies are becoming multicultural structures. Furthermore, the existence of these multicultural societies directly expresses the relevance of the concept of multicultural education. Ensuring equality, inclusiveness, and social justice in education systems has become one of the main priorities at both national and international levels. At the same time, the existing cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia is of great importance in terms of the development of educational integration and academic mobility. The object of this study is the multicultural education system based on Azerbaijan-Russia cooperation, and the subject is the analysis of the role of the theoretical foundations of multicultural education within the relations between the two countries.

The main purpose of this article is to determine the impact of the multicultural education model on educational cooperation between the two states. To achieve this goal, the following objectives are identified:

- To examine the theoretical foundations and components of multicultural education;
- To study multicultural values in the dynamics of the development of Azerbaijani-Russian educational cooperation;
- To assess the social and scientific significance of this cooperation within the framework of the multicultural education system between the two countries.

When preparing the study, research methods such as the historical-chronological approach and analysis of scientific documents have been used. The source base of the study includes scientific monographs, academic articles, and the official website of the Baku International Multiculturalism Center.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine the role of multicultural education in the development of educational cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. The methodological framework is based on the systematic analysis and interpretation of scholarly literature, higher education textbooks, academic articles, and institutional documents addressing multicultural education, multiculturalism, and Azerbaijan–Russia educational relations.

A historical-chronological approach is used to examine the development of educational cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, with particular attention to the period from 2000 to 2025. This approach enables the study to identify major developments in bilateral educational relations and to examine their relationship with academic mobility, institutional cooperation, and the internationalization of higher education.

Qualitative document analysis is employed to examine both the theoretical foundations and practical manifestations of multicultural education. The documentary corpus consists of academic monographs, scholarly articles, higher education textbooks, and institutional materials concerning multiculturalism, multicultural education, cultural and religious diversity, and Azerbaijan–Russia educational cooperation. Particular attention is given to sources addressing the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism and the incorporation of multiculturalism-related courses into higher education.

The analysis is conducted in three interconnected stages. First, the theoretical literature is examined to identify the principal concepts, objectives, components, and approaches of multicultural education. Second, these theoretical dimensions are examined in relation to the Azerbaijani educational context, including the teaching of Introduction to Multiculturalism and Azerbaijani Multiculturalism in higher education institutions. Third, educational relations between Azerbaijan and Russia are examined with regard to academic mobility, institutional cooperation, scientific interaction, and the dissemination of multicultural values.

The selected materials are analyzed thematically in order to identify recurring concepts and relationships across the sources. The principal analytical themes are equality and inclusion, intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, academic mobility, international educational cooperation, and the institutionalization of multicultural education. These themes are subsequently interpreted in relation to the central objective of the study, namely, determining the role of multicultural education in the development of Azerbaijan–Russia educational cooperation.

The source base comprises the works of Abdulla (2017, 2019), Ahadova (2014), Eldering (1996), Hytten (2017), Talishinski and Hasanli (2018), Quliyeva (2022), Guliyeva (2024, 2026), and documentary material published by the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre (2018). These sources were selected on the basis of their direct relevance to the theoretical foundations of

multicultural education, the Azerbaijani multiculturalism model, and the development of educational cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia. Accordingly, the study relies on qualitative interpretation and historical analysis rather than statistical measurement, with the aim of establishing conceptual and historical relationships between multicultural education and bilateral educational cooperation.

Theoretical foundations of multicultural education

Multicultural education is a comprehensive approach that aims to create equal educational opportunities for students by taking into account the cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, gender, and social diversity that exists in modern societies. This approach is not limited to teaching or introducing different cultures but also seeks to eliminate inequalities, discrimination, and stereotypes that exist in the education system. The main goal of multicultural education is to ensure that each student receives quality education regardless of cultural and social background, to create favorable conditions for the development of individual potential, and to support students in becoming active members of society. This process helps develop values such as mutual respect, tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility among learners. Multicultural education is also formed within specific social, historical, and cultural contexts, which makes it necessary to incorporate different perspectives and experiences into the educational process. As a result, multicultural education represents a modern educational philosophy that recognizes the history, values, and life experiences of not only the dominant culture but also all ethnic and social groups, considers them important resources for the development of education and society, and contributes to the formation of a more democratic and equal society (Eldering, 1996; Hytten, 2017).

Modern education is regarded as one of the principal factors contributing to the humanization of social and economic relations and the formation of value-oriented personal attitudes that promote intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Contemporary educational systems are expected not only to prepare highly qualified professionals but also to cultivate civic responsibility, democratic values, tolerance, and respect for cultural and religious diversity. In multicultural and multinational societies, education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' worldviews by creating opportunities for constructive interaction among representatives of different ethnic, cultural, and religious communities. In this context, educational institutions increasingly face the challenge of balancing secular educational principles with the need to provide students with objective knowledge about religious traditions and their role in society. Rather than being viewed solely from a theological perspective, religion may be understood as an important social and cultural phenomenon closely connected with history, philosophy, ethics, and intercultural communication. Therefore, the integration of multicultural and religious awareness into the educational process contributes to strengthening civic consciousness, mutual

understanding, and social stability while supporting the formation of an inclusive educational environment based on equality, dialogue, and respect for diversity (Talishinski & Hasanli, 2018).

Multicultural education began to take shape more strongly after the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. This approach is based on core values such as freedom, justice, equality, and human dignity and is described by the National Association for Multicultural Education as an inclusive education model. At that time, the main objective was to introduce different ethnic groups while also highlighting their history, identity, and empowerment. Programs such as Black Studies, Women's Studies, Chicano/a Studies, Asian American Studies, and Social Justice Education were established at universities in this direction.

The goals of multicultural education can be grouped into three main areas:

- At the academic level, it aims to make the educational process more inclusive, incorporate different cultural knowledge into teaching, and reduce Eurocentric perspectives;
- At the social and cultural level, it focuses on strengthening understanding among different groups, reducing stereotypes, fostering cultural identity, and enhancing cooperation among different communities;
- At the political level, it encourages students to contribute to the development of a more just society and to critically examine and address systemic inequalities.

The five main components of multicultural education are content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Based on these considerations, multicultural education is a comprehensive approach that, in addition to recognizing and protecting differences, also addresses the formation of knowledge and the development of social structures (Hytten, 2017).

In addition to these dimensions, there are different approaches to multicultural education. These approaches encompass different theoretical and practical directions, and each emphasizes different goals and priorities in education. The first approach is called the Disadvantage Approach. This model mainly focuses on eliminating the educational disadvantages experienced by students from ethnic groups and supporting the improvement of their academic outcomes. The second approach is the Enrichment Approach. In this model, ethnic and cultural diversity is regarded as an enrichment of education and society, and special courses and multicultural subjects are included to reflect this diversity. The third approach is called the Bicultural Competence Approach. The purpose of this model is to help students from minority groups develop competence in both their own culture and the dominant culture. The fourth model is the Collective Equality Groups Approach. This model focuses on structural equality among groups rather than solely on the individual level and includes adapting the curriculum, teacher training, and school management to multicultural principles. This approach also takes into account gender, social class, and other forms

of inequality. Generally, these approaches demonstrate that multicultural education aims not only to address ethnic issues but also to promote social justice and structural equality on a broader scale (Eldering, 1996).

One of the countries that has adopted multiculturalism as a priority of state policy is the Republic of Azerbaijan. The foundation of this policy was laid by National Leader Heydar Aliyev and is currently being continued under President Ilham Aliyev. In addition, the legal foundations of multiculturalism policy in Azerbaijan are reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, while the activities of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the ideology of “Azerbaijanism” play an important role in its development. Principles such as tolerance, equality, freedom of conscience and expression, the right to national identity, and the use of the native language are ensured by the state. Thus, at the initiative of President Ilham Aliyev, the institutional framework in the field of multiculturalism was expanded, the State Counselor Service and the Baku International Multiculturalism Center were established, and 2016 was declared the “Year of Multiculturalism.” Azerbaijan also actively participates in the promotion of multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue at the international level. Global forums, summits of religious leaders, and humanitarian events held within the framework of the “Baku Process” have contributed to positioning the country as a center of international dialogue. While implementing its multiculturalism policy, Azerbaijan closely cooperates with international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, UNESCO, and the OSCE. The country has acceded to numerous international conventions and declarations, undertaking commitments in the fields of human rights, religious freedom, and the protection of national minorities. As a result, Azerbaijan has established an environment of coexistence based on mutual respect among different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in society, prevents separatist tendencies, strengthens interstate understanding, and contributes to global peace (Abdulla, 2017, 2019).

The education system is of great importance in disseminating the main principles of multiculturalism policy. Multiculturalism is a key element of social, public, and cultural development within the Azerbaijani model, creating conditions for the development of mutual relations and trust between Azerbaijan and other countries and ethnic groups. Particular emphasis is currently placed on teaching the foundations of multiculturalism in higher education institutions in Azerbaijan. Enabling young people, who are considered a major driving force of society, to understand and internalize multiculturalism as a state policy and to be educated in this spirit is considered particularly important. For this purpose, subjects such as “Introduction to Multiculturalism” and “Azerbaijani Multiculturalism” are taught at the bachelor's and master's levels of higher education institutions in Azerbaijan, thereby broadening students' multicultural

perspectives regardless of their field of specialization. Since the autumn semester of the 2014–2015 academic year, the subject “Azerbaijani Multiculturalism” has gradually been included in the curricula of universities in various countries, including Russia, Italy, Georgia, Belarus, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic. At the same time, summer and winter schools organized in this field provide practical opportunities for students and lecturers from foreign countries not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to deepen their understanding through direct engagement with the cultural and social environment of Azerbaijan (Quliyeva, 2022).

In addition, in 2018, the subject “Azerbaijani Multiculturalism” was regularly taught at several leading universities in Russia, Turkey, and Portugal. This process was also possible within the framework of cooperation established between the Baku International Multiculturalism Center and these higher education institutions. The main goal of teaching this course is to provide students with broader knowledge about Azerbaijani culture, history, and multicultural values. Students participating in the program are interested in studying or working in Azerbaijan or teaching the subject in their respective countries in the future. Thus, the course “Azerbaijani Multiculturalism” is taught at many universities both within Azerbaijan and abroad, and this process continues to expand at the initiative of the Baku International Multiculturalism Center (Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, 2018).

The above-mentioned information demonstrates that the Republic of Azerbaijan actively and continuously cooperates with other countries, particularly the Russian Federation, in the field of education with the aim of developing multicultural values. This cooperation includes systematic processes aimed at improving the quality of education and integrating it into the international academic environment. In this regard, the process involves not only the harmonization of educational programs among different universities but also student and faculty exchanges, joint scientific research projects, and academic activities such as conferences and seminars. Such initiatives contribute to strengthening mutual understanding and enhancing scientific cooperation among educational institutions, while also enabling students and academic staff from different cultural backgrounds to become better acquainted with one another. For example, within the framework of higher education cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation during the period 2000–2025, a considerable number of students gained opportunities to study at universities in the other country. This experience contributed not only to the enhancement of academic knowledge but also to a better understanding of cultural diversity. Therefore, these initiatives contribute to the broader international promotion of Azerbaijan's multiculturalism model and strengthen its position within the scientific and educational environment (Guliyeva, 2024, 2026).

Conclusion

The study concluded that multicultural education is a complex pedagogical approach that promotes social justice, equal opportunities, and the formation of an inclusive educational environment in modern societies. This educational model is not limited to the recognition of cultural diversity but also contributes to reducing stereotypes toward different cultures and fostering values of tolerance among pupils and students. Cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation in the field of education creates favorable conditions for the mutual integration of multicultural education systems and the internationalization of the academic environment. Within the framework of this cooperation, important steps have been taken, including the development of student and academic exchange programs, the implementation of joint scientific projects, and the mutual recognition of diplomas. As a result, multicultural education and international academic cooperation are of strategic importance for improving the quality of education, expanding intercultural dialogue, and deepening global integration.

Nushaba Guliyeva conceived and designed the study, conducted the literature review, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and drafted and revised the manuscript. Muhammet Nimet Çavuş contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the findings and critically revised the manuscript. Nushaba Guliyeva, as the corresponding author, coordinated the manuscript submission and correspondence. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Author Contributions

Nushaba Guliyeva conceived and designed the study, conducted the literature review, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and drafted and revised the manuscript. Muhammet Nimet Çavuş contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the findings and critically revised the manuscript. Nushaba Guliyeva, as the corresponding author, coordinated the manuscript submission and correspondence. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial, institutional, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research, analysis, or publication of this study.

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