



**Risk reduction  
tools for education  
internationalization**



## **RISK REDUCTION TOOLS FOR EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION**

### **HERRAMIENTAS DE REDUCCIÓN DE RIESGOS PARA LA INTERNACIONALIZACIÓN EDUCATIVA**

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#### **Abstract**

The internationalization of education is attended with numerous risks. The paper aims to identify, analyze and evaluate tools of de-risking for education internationalization. Our study is based on the analysis of the activities of multicultural educational platforms. The research being done involved the study of the level of tolerance of students and teachers of Kazan Federal University (Russia), as well as an expert survey on the possibility of using multicultural educational platforms. The experience of using multicultural educational platforms by universities as a tool to reduce the risks of internationalization allows to extend our geographical scope through their activities in a rapidly changing environment and to raise graduates' competitiveness.

**Keywords:** risk, education, internationalization, intercultural education, opportunities.

La internacionalización de la educación se atiende con numerosos riesgos. El documento tiene como objetivo identificar, analizar y evaluar herramientas de eliminación de riesgos para la internacionalización de la educación. Nuestro estudio se basa en el análisis de las actividades de plataformas educativas multiculturales. La investigación que se realizó involucró el estudio del nivel de tolerancia de los estudiantes y maestros de la Universidad Federal de Kazan (Rusia), así como una encuesta de expertos sobre la posibilidad de utilizar plataformas educativas multiculturales. La experiencia del uso de plataformas educativas multiculturales por parte de las universidades como una herramienta para reducir los riesgos de internacionalización permite ampliar nuestro alcance geográfico a través de sus actividades en un entorno que cambia rápidamente y elevar la competitividad de los graduados.

**Palabras clave:** riesgo, educación, internacionalización, educación intercultural, oportunidades.



## Introduction

Modern society is characterized by a high level of globalization. This makes the strategy of internationalization of education one of the major tendencies of its development. The interaction of cultures in the process of training and education wends the way of productive dialogue, creating conditions for developing tolerance, harmonizing relations between representatives of various ethnic groups and faiths. At the same time, maintaining the national identity and the originality of ethnic cultures and their values is of great moment (Dzhurinsky, 2007).

The internationalization of education faces a number of contradictions. This is a problem of getting the balance between national educational traditions and universal education. Manifestations of xenophobia, nationalist sentiments and populist political movements in society pose risks to improving the interaction of education systems of different countries.

Education is an open system, getting all the changes in the world around. It is in active interaction with the external environment, which is expressed in the formation of the contingent of trainees, staffing, information exchange, orientation to the social order and the labor market. Uncertainty is inherent in most of these processes. There is a probability of situations that do not suggest a definitive outcome. This uncertainty is the cause of the risks of internationalization. Conventionally, these risks fall into two groups: external and internal.

External risks are indirect, and their impact is observed after a certain period of time. They may comprehend political risks: the possibility of changes in the legal framework of education and migration policy, changes in the state policy in relation to multicultural education, bureaucracy, and global political processes. External risks are also socio-economic risks: changes in the social values of society, attitudes towards representatives of other ethnic groups, growth in migration processes, problems of adaptation and integration of migrants, lack of funding for intercultural education, reduction in funding for social programs, economic downturn, and growth in unemployment. At the same time, specific industry-specific risks of the education system can be identified as a separate group, including global educational trends, decrease in the educational component of education, lack of development of valid means of assessing competencies, and extension of the length of training (Mardani & Fallah, 2018; Marques et al., 2017).

Internal risks are caused by the microenvironment of internationalization of education, i.e. direct process of interaction of its subjects. This group includes education management risks or the so-called organizational risks: administrative barriers, risks of innovation processes, information risks. Also this category comprehends the risks associated with the subjects of internationalization: communicative and psychological barriers of the subjects of the educational process; stereotypes of perception of people of another nationality, race, confession; low level of motivation; low level of multicultural competence (OECD, Trends shaping education, 2019).

Thus, the above risk analysis shows a variety of threats and challenges in the external and internal environment of the internationalization of education. This actualizes the search for the tools to reduce the risks of intercultural education that can neutralize the effects of



threats and problems in the implementation of the policy of internationalization of education. One such tool is a multicultural educational platform.

## Methods

In this article, we propose to consider the tools for reducing the risks of internationalization of education. The study was conducted on the basis of Kazan Federal University (Russia). The study consisted of two stages. The purpose of the first stage of the study is the level of tolerance of the subjects of the educational process. A survey of students and teachers was chosen as a research method. A total of 62 students took part in the survey, of which 38 were foreign students and 16 were the teachers of KFU. A *Tolerance Index* express-questionnaire developed by Soldatova G.U., Shaigerova L.A., Prokofieva T.Y., Kravtsova O.A. was used as a measuring tool. The basis of the questionnaire is statements that reflect both the general attitude to the world and other people, and social attitudes in various areas of interaction, where tolerance and intolerance of a person are manifested. The methodology also comprises statements revealing attitudes towards certain social groups (minorities, mentally ill people, beggars), communicative attitudes (respect for the opinions of opponents, readiness for constructive conflict resolution and productive cooperation). Special attention is paid to ethnic tolerance-intolerance (attitude to people of a different race and ethnic group, to their own ethnic group, assessment of cultural distance). The questionnaire includes three subscales: ethnic tolerance, social tolerance, tolerance as a personal trait (Soldatova et al., 2002; Oveisi et al., 2018a).

The second stage of the study was dedicated to the analysis of the activities of the multicultural educational platform created in 2016 as part of the TEMPUS project "ALLMEET: Lifelong Learning for the Development of Multicultural Education and Tolerance in the Russian Federation". The research method was an expert survey. Representatives of target groups were involved as experts: university professors, representatives of the government, law enforcement agencies, the media, religious activities, and the heads of enterprises recruiting migrants for work. A total of 15 experts were interviewed. For the survey, a questionnaire of two parts was elaborated. The first part of the questions was related to general assessment of the processes of formation of tolerant attitudes in the Republic of Tatarstan. The second part of the questions aimed to analyze the activities of multicultural educational platforms, their tasks and the impact on the internationalization of education.

Of the experts involved, 53% is represented by people under 36 years old, 34% is between 36 and 55 years old, 13% is over 55 years old. 66% is made by men, 33% - by women. 87% of those who have higher education (48% of them have an academic title), 13% - secondary specialized education. An analysis of the field of activity of experts shows that 35% of experts works in the field of education, 21% - in the media, 19% - religious figures, 13% - in business, 6% - in municipal authorities and law enforcement agencies.

## Results And Discussion

When analyzing the responses to the *Tolerance Index* express questionnaire, the following results were obtained. 92% of the survey participants had an average level of tolerance. This result is shown by the respondents who may exhibit either tolerant or



intolerant attitudes. In some social situations, they behave tolerantly, in others they may be intolerant. In addition, various types of tolerance were assessed.

Not only the general level of tolerance was assessed, but also individual types of tolerance. Analysis of the assessment of the level of ethnic tolerance revealed that 52% of the participants had an average level, 48% - a high one. This demonstrates a general friendly attitude towards representatives of other ethnic groups and a focus on intercultural interaction. Based on the "social tolerance" subscale, it was found that 96% of the respondents had both tolerant and intolerant manifestations in relation to various social groups (minorities, criminals, mentally ill people), as well as personal attitudes towards certain social processes.

The study of the subscale "tolerance as a personal trait" embraced the items to diagnose personal traits, attitudes, and beliefs, which largely determine a person's attitude to the world. The results showed that 87% of participants had an average level, 13% - the highest level.

Thus, the evaluation results of the course participants indicate inconsistent tolerant attitudes, the degree of which is often determined by the specific situation. These findings demonstrate a preliminary level of target groups and actualize the need for educational courses and trainings aimed at developing a tolerant mindset in society.

During an expert survey, the general characteristics of interethnic relations in society and the activities of a multicultural educational platform were studied.

67% of experts rates the level of interethnic relations in the Republic of Tatarstan as high, 20% indicates the absence of conflict, the highest level of interethnic tolerance and consent.

Many experts (73%) believe that in the Republic of Tatarstan sufficient efforts are made to keep intercultural (interethnic and interfaith) dialogue current and harmony.

To the question "Who makes the main efforts to promote intercultural tolerance in the Republic of Tajikistan?" the experts have answered that this is, first of all, the state (80% of respondents), as well as cultural institutions (47%), mass media (40%), educational institutions (33%), ethnic groups (27%), public organizations (20%) that do. Thus, according to the experts, the state should play a leading role in the development of a tolerant society.

When defining the role of educational institutions in this process, the experts gave prominence to the following: formation of knowledge about the language, culture and characteristics of various ethnic groups (60% of experts); development of inter-ethnic and inter-faith interaction skills (33%); training on ways to resolve intercultural conflicts (6%); development of a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other ethnic and religious groups (42%); formation of knowledge about one's own culture and pride in it (42%).

67% of experts notes that ethnic identity is respected in the universities of Tatarstan.

In discussion with the experts of the role of multicultural educational platforms in building a tolerant society, the majority of experts (42%) replied that they had heard of the existence of such platforms, and 19% of the experts was either familiar with their work or took part in their activities.



When answering the question “What is, to your mind, a multicultural educational platform?”, The answers of experts are divided as follows: 87% believes that a multicultural educational platform is an innovative educational technology, the mechanism of which is aimed at creating conditions to develop tolerance. 13% of respondents treats the intercultural educational platform as an information platform on the Internet for communication of the representatives of various social groups.

Defining the functions of multicultural educational platforms, experts singled out the following: assistance in building a dialogue between representatives of various cultural groups (60% of respondents); research in the field of intercultural relations and values of target groups (20%); interaction with target groups in their social and cultural environments (20%).

The experts identified the following categories as the target groups in the activities of multicultural educational platforms: students and pupils, parents (60%); government officials (47%); ethnic groups (40%); the media (47%); educational establishments (40%); public organizations and political parties (20%).

The following answers were received to the question “What activities do you consider to be most effective to develop intercultural tolerance?”: innovative training courses for employees of government bodies, the media, social workers, aimed at developing tolerance (60% of experts); creation of web resources (20%); free consultations on various issues for arriving foreigners (27%); trainings for migrants to develop adaptation skills (53%); conferences, seminars, round tables with involvement of students, youth and other social circles on issues of intercultural interaction, education and management of intercultural conflicts (73%).

Initiators of the process of strengthening intercultural tolerance, according to the experts’ assessment, are the state (87%); ethnic groups (53%); the media (47%); educational establishments and public organizations (27%); political parties (20%); cultural institutions (13%).

Thus, the data of the expert survey show that the level of interethnic tolerance in the Republic of Tatarstan is quite high and the state plays the main role in this matter. According to most experts, multicultural educational platform is an innovative technology designed to create conditions for intercultural dialogue. This is the main function of the platform. The main target groups, experts believe, are students, learners and parents, since these categories are the most socially active. They also distinguished training courses, conferences, seminars and round tables as most effective among the forms of work.

## **Summary**

The main goal of the multicultural educational platform is to create conditions for the development of intercultural dialogue between people and groups of different nationalities, cultures, religions and languages (Smolyaninova & Korshunova, 2016; Hammer & Lee, 2011; Fuertes et al., 2009; Oveisi et al., 2018b; Agara, 2017). Solving the following tasks is conducive to achieving the goal of a multicultural educational platform:

1. Organization of interaction and constructive cooperation of educational institutions, state and law enforcement agencies, public organizations and associations, the media, non-



governmental institutions on the basis of the multicultural educational platform of KFU to promote tolerance and intercultural harmony in society.

2. Conducting and organizing fundamental and applied research of ethnic cultures, interethnic and interreligious relations, state languages and native languages of the representatives of peoples living in the republic; interethnic conflictology and mediation.

3. Monitoring of the migration situation in the region, problems of ethnic socialization of youth, national and religious conflict situations; conducting intercultural educational activities in the region.

4. Assistance in legal, linguistic, social, psychological and cultural counseling and adaptation of migrants, in the development of skills of intercultural interaction, the formation of tolerant consciousness and behavior (Careaga Butter et al., 2013).

5. Development and organization of teaching aids and programs, as well as the courses and trainings, master classes on intercultural interaction, development of tolerant relations, conflict resolution for participants in target groups, and professional adaptation skills in a multicultural environment (Aetdinova, 2016).

6. Organization and holding of conferences, seminars, "round tables" in order to disseminate information about the activities of the multicultural educational platform, its research and services provided, discussion of the problems of intercultural and interfaith interaction in the region.

7. Creation of a virtual multicultural educational platform – a web platform on the university's website to provide free open access to educational resources to users of various nationalities and social groups (Tomin et al., 2016).

Thus, the activity of multicultural educational platform is grounded on the creation of three interconnected educational spaces and the problem solving based on them. These spaces are:

1. Physical space: research and educational activities.
2. Virtual space: a multicultural educational web platform.
3. Outer space: interactions with target groups in their social and cultural environments.

## **Conclusions**

Following on from the data obtained, it can be concluded that the activities of the multicultural educational platform fully suit the purpose in hand – reducing the risks of internationalizing education by creating conditions to develop intercultural dialogue between people and groups of different nationalities, cultures, religions and languages.

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