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Individual Importance of Multicultural Competence in relation to Components of Students' Self-regulated Learning

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Abstract

The study focuses on self-regulation of multicultural learning in relation to importance that students ascribe to multicultural subcompetencies. A questionnaire on individual´s perception of importance of multicultural competence was selected as a research instrument and was distributed to 151 students of Pedagogy. We found significant differences in assessing the importance of multicultural subcompetencies which constitute components of multicultural competence: awareness, knowledge and skills. It was also found that that self-regulated learning components display a close relationship in connection with multicultural competences. An assumption has been disproved that the values of self-regulated learning components increase with increasing importance assigned to various multicultural subcompetencies by students.

1. Introduction

Self-regulated learning is an ample area explored by specialists for many years. Yet there are topics that have not been described in great detail. These are mainly the topics that could be termed "application topics" meaning application of principles of self-regulated learning in specific areas. One such area is the area of multicultural learning. Multicultural learning displays certain unique features. The study in hand focuses on self-regulated multicultural learning in university students. The aim of the study is to present a research focused on the relationship between the individual´s perception of importance of multicultural subcompetencies and components of self-regulated learning (motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition and attribution).

2. Multicultural self-regulated learning

Self-regulated learning

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According to Zimmerman (2002) self-regulation cannot be seen as a personality trait nor as a specific skill. It is an internal management process of self regulation, during which the learning student transforms their personality into skills needed for learning. Learning in this sense is not something that is aimed at students, but something that comes from students themselves. The student controls: 1) the cognitive dimension of learning and 2) the non-cognitive dimension of learning (motivation, will, emotions).

From the perspective of self-regulation, we include the process of cognition (a cognitive aspect), regulation of cognition (a metacognitive aspect) and regulation of attitudes, motives, needs, emotions (a non-cognitive aspect) which is the key to initiating the process of self-regulated learning (as reported in Boekaerts, Pintrich, Zeidner, 2005; Schunk, Zimmerman, 2008; Pintrich, 1999)

Over the last thirty years varying perspectives emerged in specialised foreign literature regarding the issue of self-regulated learning (Boekaerts, Pintrich, Zeidner, 2005; Zimmermann, Schunk, 2001; Puustinen, Pulkkinen, 2001), which brought various models of self-regulated learning (Borkowski, 1992; Winne, 1995, Zimmerman, 1995, 2002, Pintrich, 1999, 2002, Boekaerts, 1995, 2002). We follow Zimmerman´s model of self-regulated learning.

The self-regulatory cycle by Zimmerman (1996) includes four stages (phases):
1. Self-evaluation and self-monitoring. At this stage, students estimate their ability. This is done mostly on the basis of a prior monitoring of one´s own work (i.e. learning) and its results. The first step of this self-regulated learning model thus includes an assessment of the current levels of knowledge in relation to the task. When students begin to study a hitherto unknown subject, they only have a vague idea of how successful they might be in mastering it. For example, students often fail to predict how long their study preparation takes. It usually helps when they begin to keep detailed records. This way the students improve their ability to estimate their powers effectively.
2. Goal setting and strategic planning. This phase includes an analysis of learning tasks, setting goals and planning or improving of learning strategies. When acquiring a completely new curriculum, students are usually unable to divide the task into parts, set specific targets or create an effective learning strategy.
3. Strategy-implementation monitoring. The third step involves applying the selected learning strategy. It depends on the previously used learning strategies, feedback from classmates and teachers and self-monitoring. Unless the student begins to analyse the steps that lead to curricular goals, they continue to use familiar learning strategies. Once the students have been able to analyse the steps of their learning and evaluate their effectiveness, they are prepared to use new learning strategies.
4. Strategic outcome-monitoring. The fourth step is to monitor and evaluate the results of students´ own learning. This step is needed in order to ensure changes (in their learning strategy) in case that their learning outcomes are not consistent with the stated curricular objectives. In this step, the student may also realise that the objectives set at the beginning are too ambitious, and therefore beyond their power.

Students who are successful in their studies, are able to specify their learning goals better, use multiple learning strategies, monitor (i.e. via self-monitoring) their own learning and adapt to the outcomes of their learning more systematically and more often. Self-monitoring means a deliberate observation of obvious, but also hidden, aspects of one´s own task solving. Successful students feel responsible for managing their own learning process. Such students also show a higher degree of self-efficacy than students who are unsuccessful. Self-efficacy in Bandura´s concept (in Zimmerman, 1996) means perception or belief in one´s own ability to learn or to solve given tasks. It is possible and desirable to develop certain components of self-regulated learning, such as using different cognitive strategies, at the beginning of individual´s primary education. Zimmerman (1996), however, tends to believe that the metacognitive component of self-regulated learning should developed no sooner than upper school age and beyond.

Multicultural learning

M. J. Bennett has been exploring multicultural learning systematically. His conception of multicultural learning[1] is *"acquiring increased awareness of subjective cultural context (world view), including one's own, and developing a greater ability to interact sensitively and competently across cultural contexts as both an immediate and long-term effect of exchange"* (Bennett, 2009). Subjective cultural context means a unique perspective of an individual on the phenomena, a way of organising communication and a way of grasping categories of good and evil. To summarise it can be said that subjective cultural context is the worldview of each individual. Worldview does not determine behaviour of individuals sharing a given culture. It helps create context in which such behaviour occurs (Bennett, 2009). The first part of Bennett's definition implies that one of the goals of multicultural learning is to gain sufficient awareness about the worldview of others but also of one´s own perception of the world. Bennett finds it inappropriate to teach about cultures of other nations within multicultural learning. He believes that this belongs to other type of learning. Regarding multicultural learning it is important to obtain an algorithm of understanding culturally different individuals rather than, for example, acquiring knowledge of the history of the EU countries.

The second part of Bennett's definition concerns multicultural sensitivity[1]. This concept is mentioned in literature more frequently than multicultural learning. Bennett (2009) sees it as a perception of cultural differences. Higher multicultural sensitivity leads to better perception of cultural differences. Bennett published a paper on multicultural sensitivity in 1986. He elaborated a model of multicultural sensitivity development which still serves as the base for practical education and training in the field of multicultural education. Mueller and Pope (2001)[2] also emphasise the ability to be culturally sensitive and responsible. According to them cultural sensitivity is associated with multicultural awareness and knowledge that are conceptualised as multicultural competencies. To simplify, it could be said that multicultural learning is an intentional process of acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities and formation of multicultural awareness in relation to multicultural environment. Multicultural learning is aimed at achieving multicultural competence.

In 1997 Pope and Reynolds defined multicultural competence as *"awareness, knowledge and skills necessary for effective work across ethnic and cultural differences of different groups."* Reasonable generality and at the same time accuracy can be found in a definition of K. D. Deardorff (2006) which addressed 23 experts from USA, Canada and Great Britain. The result was a consensual definition of multicultural competence as follows: *"the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. Such ability is based on intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes."* The research we present here is based on multicultural competence model designed by Pope, Reynolds and Mueller (2004). Pope and Reynolds published explicitly a collection of 32 multicultural subcompetencies in student affairs. It is based on a three-pronged model of multicultural competence applied in the 80s of the 20th century in psychological counselling in the U.S. The model consists of three components: multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills (Pope, Reynolds, 1997) The research operates with these three components. Multicultural awareness includes attitudes, beliefs, values, assumptions and also realising the necessary determinants for effective communication in a culturally diverse society. It is assumed that individual´s consciousness can at the beginning of educational activities display inappropriate elements such as bias, stereotypes or prejudice. Multicultural knowledge includes individual´s knowledge of different cultures. The initial assumption is based on correcting the knowledge about different cultures that may be wrong and incomplete. Multicultural skills enable effective and meaningful interaction, such as consensus, as a necessity of communication between different cultural groups. Multicultural skills are based on awareness and knowledge aimed at appropriate and effective changes in multicultural reality. Multicultural skills account for behaviour that reflects multicultural awareness and knowledge. The centre of these skills is the art of cross-cultural communication and understanding of how each culture affects the form and contents of communication (Pope, Reynolds, 1997).

Multicultural self-regulated learning

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[1] Bennett uses the term "intercultural learning". In this paper, however, we use the adjective "multicultural". We consider this term to be more accurate as the prefix "multi" refers to an interaction between multiple cultures. The prefix "inter" refers to a relationship between two cultures. The prefix "multi" is used even if the cited author uses the prefix "inter", in which case the fact is always mentioned.
[2] Bennett uses the term "intercultural sensitivity".
[3] Mueller and Pope operate with the term "cultural sensitivity".

Multicultural self-regulated learning is a process of regulation, monitoring and evaluating one´s own learning, which is aimed at acquisition of competencies necessary for effective communication in a multicultural environment. It would be simplistic to view multicultural self-regulated learning as a mere "applied self-regulation of learning". Multicultural learning is a multilayered process of acquiring knowledge, skill and attitude components which make its self-regulation internally very rich.

In our research we focused on four components of self-regulation of multicultural learning: motivation, self-efficacy, attribution and metacognition.

What motivates an individual to learn to orient in the area of a multicultural society, intercultural relations and in the specifics of different cultures? We have gained such knowledge by teaching multicultural education to students of social pedagogy at Tomas Bata University in Zlín. In the process of teaching multicultural education, we have identified three levels of motivation for multicultural learning in students. These levels are represented by the following statements of the students:

1. *I must learn about other cultures in order to pass the exam.* The previous statement represents extrinsic motivation. Such learning is more of an instrumental nature, as it becomes a tool for obtaining a reward.
2. *I must learn about other cultures in order not to get lost (in a multicultural environment, intercultural relations), or in order to teach others.* This statement represents a certain kind of an intergrade between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The motivation for multicultural learning here stems from both a self-preserving need to succeed in multicultural confrontation and also from the need to improve one´s teaching competence.
3. *I learn about other cultures out of interest and because it helps me develop.* This statement has been identified as intrinsic motivation for multicultural learning. Students find it difficult to verbalise this "need" that leads them to focus on foreign cultures. Our experience is that such motivation for multicultural learning in students is a strong and relatively constant one and is not connected to the actual learning (i.e. students enter the educational process with this kind of motivation).

Motivation pervades the whole process of multicultural learning and plays a significant role in acquisition of the contents of all three components of multicultural competence. Above all, motivation appears to be a complementary part of the process of self-regulated multicultural learning.

As we mentioned earlier, self-efficacy is a belief of an individual in their own abilities to learn and perform effectively (Bandura in Zimmerman, 1996). It means asking a basic question: "Can I solve this task in this situation?" Self-efficacy is related to:

1. motivational beliefs (motivation), which includes interest in the task, the attributed value of the task and emotional reactions. The higher self-efficacy, the higher the motivational beliefs of the student.
2. negative emotions. The lower rate of self-efficacy, the higher the individual's negative emotions related to learning (Linnenbrink, Pintrich, 2003).

In our research we have demonstrated a high degree of correlation between self-efficacy and motivation, in relation to multicultural competence.

Attribution (or causal attribution) means students´ belief about the prevailing causes of success and failure of their learning. Causal attribution expresses human tendency to attribute their successes, failures or conduct to certain external and internal causes. A student who regulates their multicultural learning, understands the causes of success and failure of their learning. If the learning process is successful, the student attributes this success to their own effort expended for learning. In the opposite case, a student with low levels of self-regulation attributes their failure to uncontrollable causes, such as the fact that the task was too difficult.

Metacognition lays active control of cognitive processes during learning. Metacognition means a higher level of thinking that is reflected in the following cognitive activities: planning, analysis, evaluation, monitoring and reflecting on issues and decisions. Metacognition is considered a determinant of successful learning. An individual who can accurately assess their knowledge is better equipped for their future development (Brown in Lane, 2009). Within the model of multicultural competence, a metacognitive component of the self-regulatory process is associated with a component of awareness. Multicultural awareness includes attitudes, beliefs, values, assumptions and awareness of the determinants necessary for effective communication in a culturally diverse society. It is assumed that individual´s multicultural awareness may contain improper elements in their early learning activities, such as bias, stereotypes or prejudices (Pope, Reynolds, 1997). Self-awareness or the ability to realise certain values

and attitudes are an important aspect of multicultural awareness. Individuals are not able to realise their inappropriate and flawed attitudes (stereotypes or prejudices) towards different cultures without self-regulation. The development of multicultural competence should enable an individual to reform their inappropriate attitudes and opinions (Pope, Reynolds, Mueller, 2004).

3. Method

The research was targeted at the relationship between individual´s perception of importance of multicultural subcompetencies and components of self-regulated learning. These components are motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition and attribution. The research objectives were formulated as follows:

1) determine the level of importance that students attribute to selected multicultural subcompetencies, 2) determine the level of motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition and attribution of students in relation to selected multicultural subcompetencies, 3) determine correlations between components of self-regulated multicultural learning, 4) determine the relationship between assigned importance of multicultural subcompetencies and components of self-regulated learning.

The research sample comprised of 151 university students of full-time bachelor´s and master´s degree courses in Pedagogy at Tomas Bata University in Zlín. The data were processed regardless of respondents´ gender or age. The research instrument was a questionnaire containing 29 explicitly formulated multicultural subcompetencies. These subcompetencies were formulated based on authors' personal experience with teaching multicultural education and based on the studied literature. In accordance with Pope, Reynolds (1997), Sue (1992), Pope, Reynolds, Mueller (2004) multicultural subcompetencies were divided into three areas: multicultural awareness (n = 11), multicultural knowledge (n = 9) and multicultural skills (n = 10). A factor analysis showed high saturation of two factors: knowledge (factor saturation ranging from 0.74 to 0.54) and skills (factor saturation ranging from 0.78 to 0.39). The third factor (awareness) was not entirely consistent. A component of multicultural competence called awareness proves to be the least compact and internally rather inconsistent. The research results, however, were not affected by this finding. The questionnaire contained a question associated with individual components of self-regulated learning. These components are: motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition and attribution and they were selected as one of the key determinants of self-regulated learning. The following statements represented the previously mentioned components: "I care about acquiring this subcompetence." (motivation) ; "I believe that I can acquire this subcompetence" (self-efficacy); "Acquisition of this subcompetence depends on my own abilities." (attribution); "I know how to acquire this subcompetence." (metacognition). Participants recorded their responses on a seven-point scale of Lickert type, where 1 = minimum agreement and 7 = maximum agreement).

The data analysis was carried out using a statistical software Statistica Cz, version 10. A factor analysis was used to determine the construct validity of the questionnaire. A T-test was used to determine significant differences between the components of multicultural competence. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine the degree of correlation between self-regulated learning components and the assigned importance of multicultural subcompetencies and individual components of self-regulated learning. We estimated the reliability coefficient to measure the importance attributed to multicultural subcompetencies (Cronbach's alpha = 0.963) and particularly for measuring components of self-regulated learning in students (Cronbach's alpha = 0.905).

4. Results

Student-Attributed importance of multicultural subcompetencies

T-test showed no significant difference in rating the importance of components of multicultural competence by students. Attributed importance of multicultural competence components is thus not random and similarity has been reported between the nature of the component and the assigned importance.

The top ten most important multicultural subcompetencies are subcompetence components belonging to the category of awareness (n = 7) and skills (n = 3). Among the ten least significant multicultural subcompetencies all three components of multicultural competence are represented: knowledge (n = 7), awareness (n = 2) and skills (n = 1). Subcompetencies related to awareness, i.e. affective dimension of multicultural competence were considered

the most significant by the students. On the contrary, the multicultural subcompetencies of knowledge were regarded as the least significant by students.

Such finding is particularly interesting in connection with research, which the authors had previously done (Hladík, 2011). We found that knowledge in relation with multicultural reality is a major determinant of attitudes in university students. The higher the level of knowledge of students, the more positive attitude to nationalities and ethnic minorities they displayed. However it was obvious that students do not attach great importance to multicultural knowledge. We can therefore conclude that the students underestimate the knowledge component of multicultural competence.

Table 1 The most and the least important multicultural subcompetencies

TOP 10 most important multicultural subcompetencies	M	SD
1. Awareness of the need to promote human rights. (A)	6.21	1.25
2. Awareness of the value of each individual. (A)	6.10	1.47
3. Understanding with a foreigner/stranger. (S)	5.98	1.48
4. Respect for the socio-cultural differences. (A)	5.84	1.56
5. Awareness of the value of one´s own cultural identity. (A)	5.83	1.39
6. Awareness of own prejudices and stereotypes. (A)	5.65	1.65
7. Openness to cultural differences. (A)	5.60	1.63
8. Conflict-free and constructive solutions to problems of national and ethnic minorities and foreigners. (S)	5.56	1.54
9. Awareness of the need for cooperation and conflict-free communication in intercultural contact. (A)	5.43	1.61
10. Objecting to forms of intolerance and racism. (S)	5.50	1.70

TOP 10 least important multicultural subcompetencies		
1. Knowledge of the history of the Roma people [*]. (K)	3.48	1.89
2. Knowing the number of the national structures of foreigners. (K)	3.90	1.70
3. Knowledge of the integration process of immigrants (K)	4.27	1.67
4. Knowledge of the state activities, autonomous and non-governmental organisations dealing with the issue of national and ethnic minorities and foreigners. (K)	4.48	1.65
5. Thinking about one´s multicultural learning. (S)	4.84	1.56
6. Knowledge of cultural specifics of national and ethnic minorities. (K)	4.87	1.69
7. Knowledge of implementation of multicultural education in practice. (K)	4.88	1.68
8. Awareness of the need to help the marginalised groups. (A)	4.95	1.72
9. Knowing that cultural differences can be understood as a source of enrichment (A)	5.04	1.88
10. Knowledge of the specifics of working with foreigners and national or ethnic minorities. (K)	5.07	1.57

A = awareness; K = knowledge; S = skills.
[*] Roma people are the largest ethnic minority in the Czech Republic.

Self-regulated learning components in connection with multicultural subcompetencies

We examined the relationship of four components of self-regulated learning in students in the context of multicultural competence. These components were motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition and attribution. In case of motivation, the highest score was recorded. It turns out that motivation, as a component of self-regulated learning plays the biggest role in the context of multicultural competence. Metacognition represented by the question of

whether students know how to acquire the subcompetence received the lowest score. Students are thus motivated to multicultural learning, but are not quite sure how to grasp their learning.

Table 2 Score of self-regulated learning components in relation to multicultural subcompetencies

SRL Component	M	SD
Motivation	4.81	1.14
Attribution	4.78	1.07
Self-efficacy	4.76	1.05
Metacognition	4.33	1.04

We found a high degree of correlation between all four components of self-regulated learning. According to Pearson's correlation coefficient these components correlate closely in the range from 0.55 to 0.81.

Table 3 Correlation of self-regulated learning components

SRL Component	Motivation	Self-efficacy	Attribution	Metacognition
Motivation	-			
Self-efficacy	0.81[*]	-		
Attribution	0.65[*]	0.81[*]	-	
Metacognition	0.55[*]	0.69[*]	0.72[*]	-

[*] Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed).

Motivation is represented by the statement "I care about acquiring this subcompetence" is closely correlating with self-efficacy (r = 0.81), which is represented by the statement "I believe that I can acquire this subcompetence". The students who are motivated to acquire multicultural competence believe that they will acquire multicultural competence. A close relationship (r = 0.81) is also found among self-efficacy and attribution, which is represented by the statement "Acquisition of this subcompetence depends on my own abilities." The students who believe they can acquire multicultural competencies, while relying on their own ability, can be expected to blame their possible failure on themselves and not on outside influences. An interesting relationship (r = 0.72) can be seen between metacognition represented by the statement "I know how to acquire this subcompetence" and attribution. Students who know how to acquire multicultural competence also realise that their acquisition depends on their own powers. A median level of correlation was noted between metacognition and motivation (r = 0.55), and between attribution and motivation (r = 0.65) and between metacognition and self-efficacy (r = 0.69).

A medium to tight relationship between components of self-regulated multicultural learning of students confirms findings of other authors (e.g. Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 1995, 2002; Pintrich, 1999, 2002) which state that these components are compact components of self-regulated learning. It turns out that even when learning is linked to the multicultural reality (multicultural content of learning), these components form an integrated part of the model of self-regulated learning. During the development of multicultural self-regulated learning it is necessary to work on development of these components. In this study we focused only on four components of self-regulated learning (motivation, self-efficacy, metacognition and attribution). However, when examining functionality of a multicultural model of self-regulated learning, it will be necessary to focus on other components as well.

In the end, we focused on the relationship between the attributed importance of individual´s multicultural subcompetencies and self-regulated learning components.

Table 4 Correlation between importance of multicultural subcompetencies and components of self regulated learning

Variable	Motivation	Self-efficacy	Attribution	Metacognition
Importance of m. subcompetencies	0.16[*]	0.16[*]	0.10	-0.02

* Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed).

It was found that there is only a moderate correlation between the attributed importance of multicultural subcompetencies and motivation (r = 0.16) and between importance and self-efficacy (r = 0.16). We can say that the higher importance the students attribute to the given multicultural subcompetence, the higher their motivation to acquire this subcompetence. With the increasing importance of multicultural subcompetence, student´s belief that it can be acquired grows. With the other two components of self-regulated learning, no relation to the importance of multicultural subcompetence was recorded. **The importance attributed to multicultural subcompetences does not play an important role in self-regulated multicultural learning.**

5. Conclusion

Self-regulated multicultural learning is an educational psychological category, which becomes more important in today's globalised world and its communication. We focused our attention on the field of multicultural competence and self-regulated learning. We found that there are significant differences in assessing the importance of multicultural subcompetencies forming the three components of multicultural competence, often mentioned in literature: awareness, knowledge and skills. Subcompetencies belonging to the category of awareness were rated as the most significant by students and their acquisition was regarded as important. However subcompetencies belonging to the area of knowledge, were rated as least important. Students therefore assign greater importance to subcompetencies related to attitudes and the emotional side of the personality than to cognitive component of the personality. This is the reason that the importance attributed to individual multicultural subcompetencies and metacognition are unrelated (r = -0.02). Metacognition is primarily related to cognitive learning objectives. If student´s cognitive learning objectives are not considered significant, the metacognitive component of self-regulated learning is unused. In case of the component of awareness, students do not need to think of ways to acquire the subcompetencies in this area as most of these subcompetencies have been acquired implicitly during their socialisation. However, the metacognitive component of self-regulation of multicultural learning can play a key role in the process of changing one´s attitudes. In this case, students are forced to recognise the principle of developing their own attitudes and to strive for a qualitative change, which requires developed metacognition. The situation is similar regarding attribution in relation to importance attributed to multicultural subcompetencies. No relationship has been recorded between the two variables.

The belief that the outcome of learning depends only on one´s own power/ability is linked to cognitive learning objectives. However, students prefer affective objectives which are not closely related to attribution. A moderate correlation (r = 0.16) was detected between importance and motivation and importance and self-efficacy.

However, such correlation value is considered too low for us to make any serious conclusions about the relations between these variables. To sum up, we dare say that the importance students attribute to various multicultural subcompetencies is not in relationship with self-regulated learning components. Our initial assumption: the higher the perceived value of multicultural subcompetence, the higher the degree of self-regulated learning, was thus not confirmed.

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