

MULTICULTURAL SPACE OF UKRAINE: THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS AND NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

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Annotation. *This article examines the multicultural educational space of Ukraine with a particular focus on the role of immigrants and national minorities in shaping contemporary educational processes. The study aims to analyze how cultural, linguistic, and social diversity influences the development of inclusive education, intercultural communicative competence, and pedagogical innovation in Ukrainian schools and universities. In the context of globalization, migration processes, internal displacement, and ongoing socio-political challenges, Ukraine represents a dynamic educational environment where multiculturalism has become an essential component of educational policy and practice.*

The primary aim of the research is to explore how multicultural education in Ukraine contributes to social cohesion, cultural preservation, and educational modernization. Special attention is given to the integration of national minorities and immigrants into the educational system, as well as to the transformation of teaching practices in response to increasing diversity. The study also investigates the role of bilingual education, multimodal learning environments, and intercultural pedagogical strategies in fostering inclusive and equitable education.

The methodological approach of this study is based on qualitative theoretical analysis. It includes the synthesis of existing academic literature, policy documents, and educational frameworks related to multicultural education, inclusive pedagogy, and intercultural communicative competence. The analysis also draws on comparative and descriptive methods to examine how Ukrainian educational practices align with European and

global educational standards. Particular emphasis is placed on conceptual analysis of key terms such as multiculturalism, intercultural communicative competence, bilingual education, and inclusive education.

The results of the study indicate that immigrants and national minorities play a significant role in enriching the Ukrainian educational landscape. Their presence contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, the development of multilingual competencies, and the strengthening of intercultural dialogue within educational institutions. Schools and universities increasingly function as multicultural spaces where students from different backgrounds interact, collaborate, and develop essential social and communicative skills. The study also demonstrates that bilingual education and multimodal learning environments significantly enhance students' engagement, language development, and intercultural awareness.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that Ukrainian education is undergoing a transformation toward more inclusive, learner-centered, and culturally responsive models. Teachers are increasingly adopting differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and digital storytelling as tools for managing diversity in classrooms. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including language barriers, insufficient teacher preparedness, unequal access to educational resources, and psychological difficulties experienced by displaced learners.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach to analyzing multicultural education in Ukraine as a multidimensional phenomenon that combines historical, social, pedagogical, and policy-related perspectives. Unlike studies that focus solely on linguistic or legal aspects, this article emphasizes the interconnected roles of pedagogy, identity formation, and intercultural communication in shaping educational outcomes. It also highlights the transformative impact of digital technologies and multimodal learning environments on multicultural education practices.

The practical significance of the study is reflected in its potential implications for educational policy, teacher training, and curriculum development. The findings may be useful for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to improve inclusive education systems and promote intercultural understanding in diverse educational settings.

Keywords: multicultural education, Ukraine, national minorities, immigrants, inclusive education, intercultural communicative competence, bilingual education, multimodal learning environments, teacher preparedness, educational policy.

우크라이나의 다문화적 공간: 교육 발전에 있어 이주민과 소수 민족의 역할

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국문초록. 본 연구는 현대 교육 과정 형성에서 이주민과 소수 민족의 역할을 중심으로 우크라이나의 다문화 교육 공간을 고찰한다. 본 연구의 목적은 문화적, 언어적, 사회적 다양성이 우크라이나의 초·중등 및 고등 교육 현장에서 포용적 교육, 문화 간 의사소통 역량, 그리고 교수법 혁신의 발전에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지 분석하는 것이다. 세계화, 이주 현상, 국내 실향민 발생, 그리고 지속적인 사회·정치적 도전 과제 속에서 우크라이나는 다문화주의가 교육 정책과 실천의 필수 요소로 자리 잡은 역동적인 교육 환경을 보여주고 있다.

본 연구의 주된 목적은 우크라이나의 다문화 교육이 사회적 결속, 문화 보존, 교육 현대화에 어떻게 기여하는지 탐구하는 것이다. 특히 교육 시스템 내 소수 민족 및 이주민의 통합과 다양성 증가에 대응한 교수법의 변화에 주목한다. 또한 포용적이고 평등한 교육을 촉진하기 위한 이중언어 교육, 다중 양식적 학습 환경(multimodal learning environments), 문화 간 교수 전략의 역할을 고찰한다.

연구 방법론으로는 질적 이론 분석을 채택하였다. 다문화 교육, 포용적 교수법, 문화 간 의사소통 역량과 관련된 기존 학술 문헌, 정책 문서 및 교육 프레임워크를 종합하였다. 또한 비교 및 기술적 방법을 통해 우크라이나의 교육 관행이 유럽 및 글로벌 교육 표준과 어떻게 부합하는지 분석하였다. 특히 다문화주의, 문화 간 의사소통 역량, 이중언어 교육, 포용적 교육과 같은 핵심 용어의 개념 분석에 중점을 두었다.

연구 결과, 이주민과 소수 민족은 우크라이나 교육 환경을 풍부하게 만드는 데 중요한 역할을 하는 것으로 나타났다. 이들의 존재는 문화유산 보존, 다국어 능력 배양, 교육 기관 내 문화 간 대화 강화에 기여한다. 학교와 대학은 다양한 배경을 가진 학생들이 상호작용하고 협력하며 필수적인 사회적·의사소통적 기술을 개발하는 다문화 공간으로서의 기능을 점점 더 강화하고 있다. 또한

이중언어 교육과 다중 양식적 학습 환경이 학생들의 참여도, 언어 발달, 문화 간 인식 제고에 크게 기여함을 확인하였다.

나아가 연구 결과는 우크라이나 교육이 보다 포용적이고 학습자 중심적이며 문화적으로 반응적인(culturally responsive) 모델로 변화하고 있음을 시사한다. 교사들은 학급 내 다양성을 관리하기 위한 도구로서 차별화된 교수법(differentiated instruction), 프로젝트 기반 학습(PBL), 디지털 스토리텔링을 적극적으로 도입하고 있다. 그러나 언어 장벽, 교사의 준비 부족, 교육 자원에 대한 불평등한 접근, 실향민 학생들이 겪는 심리적 어려움 등의 과제 또한 식별되었다.

본 연구의 학술적 독창성은 우크라이나의 다문화 교육을 역사적, 사회적, 교육학적, 정책적 관점을 결합한 다차원적 현상으로 분석하는 통합적 접근 방식에 있다. 언어적 또는 법적 측면에만 치중하는 기존 연구들과 달리, 본 논문은 교육적 성과를 형성하는 데 있어 교수법, 정체성 형성, 문화 간 의사소통의 상호 연결된 역할을 강조한다. 또한 다문화 교육 실천에 있어 디지털 기술과 다중 양식적 학습 환경이 미치는 변혁적 영향력을 조명한다.

본 연구의 실천적 의의는 교육 정책, 교사 연수 및 커리큘럼 개발에 대한 시사점에 반영되어 있다. 연구 결과는 포용적 교육 시스템을 개선하고 다양한 교육 환경에서 문화 간 이해를 증진하고자 하는 정책 입안자, 교육자 및 연구자들에게 유용한 자료가 될 것이다.

주제어: 다문화 교육, 우크라이나, 소수 민족, 이주민, 포용적 교육, 문화 간 의사소통 역량, 이중언어 교육, 다중 양식적 학습 환경, 교사 준비도, 교육 정책.

Introduction

Ukraine has long been characterized by ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, making multiculturalism an important component of its social and educational development. Throughout its history, various national minorities, including Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, Bulgarians, Crimean Tatars, Moldovans, and Greeks, have coexisted within Ukrainian society while preserving their cultural and linguistic identities. Their longstanding presence has shaped Ukraine's multicultural educational environment and influenced both formal and informal educational practices. At the same time, globalization, migration processes, and recent geopolitical transformations have intensified cultural diversity, creating both challenges and opportunities for the national educational system.

In recent years, Ukraine's educational landscape has undergone substantial transformation due to internal displacement, migration, and the

consequences of military conflict. Large-scale population displacement has increased the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), learners from migrant backgrounds, and culturally diverse students in schools and universities. As a result, educational institutions increasingly function as multicultural environments in which students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds interact on a daily basis. These developments have intensified the need for educational policies that promote inclusion, intercultural communication, equal educational opportunities, and social cohesion (Law of Ukraine on Education, 2017).

Multicultural educational environments have become increasingly widespread worldwide as a result of globalization, academic mobility, and migration processes (Teng & Cosier, 2024). Consequently, higher education institutions are expected not only to provide professional knowledge but also to foster intercultural communicative competence among students. The ability to interact effectively in culturally diverse settings is increasingly recognized as an essential educational outcome, particularly in foreign language education (Vilà et al., 2024).

Within the broader context of globalization and European integration, multicultural education has become a significant priority of educational reform in Ukraine. Contemporary education is increasingly understood not only as the transmission of academic knowledge but also as a mechanism for social integration, intercultural dialogue, democratic citizenship, and the promotion of tolerance. Educational institutions are therefore expected to support not only academic achievement but also empathy, critical thinking, intercultural communicative competence, and respect for cultural diversity. These priorities align closely with broader European educational principles emphasizing inclusion, democratic participation, and intercultural understanding (Banks, 2019).

An important legal framework for multicultural education in Ukraine is the Law of Ukraine “*On Education*” (2017), which seeks to balance minority rights with national cohesion. The law guarantees the protection of linguistic and cultural rights of national minorities while emphasizing proficiency in Ukrainian as the state language to support social integration and equal participation in public life. In regions with compact minority populations, schools frequently implement bilingual or multilingual instruction aimed at preserving linguistic identity while facilitating integration into Ukrainian society.

The growing diversity of Ukrainian classrooms has also encouraged the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches. Contemporary educational practices increasingly incorporate learner-centered instruction, differentiated teaching, project-based learning, multimodal educational environments, digital storytelling, and bilingual teaching strategies. Such approaches seek to transform diversity into an educational resource that enriches classroom interaction, promotes intercultural awareness, and improves accessibility for learners with diverse linguistic and cultural experiences.

Despite these developments, multicultural education in Ukraine continues to face several challenges, including language barriers, unequal access to educational and technological resources, insufficient teacher preparedness for culturally diverse classrooms, curriculum limitations, and the psychological effects of displacement and war. Addressing these challenges requires systematic educational reforms, continuous teacher professional development, inclusive policies, and stronger international cooperation.

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze the role of immigrants and national minorities in shaping the multicultural educational space of Ukraine and to identify the pedagogical, linguistic, and intercultural mechanisms that support educational inclusion in culturally diverse environments. Particular attention is given to intercultural communicative competence, bilingual education, multimodal learning environments, and teacher preparedness as key dimensions of inclusive and culturally responsive education in contemporary Ukraine.

Literature Review

Multiculturalism has become a central concept in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in societies characterized by ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. In its broadest sense, multiculturalism refers to the coexistence of multiple cultural groups within a society based on principles of equality, tolerance, mutual recognition, and respect for cultural differences. Within this framework, diversity is increasingly understood not as a social problem but as a valuable resource contributing to social innovation, democratic development, and intercultural dialogue (Banks, 2019).

In educational contexts, this understanding has led to the development of multicultural education as a pedagogical approach aimed at ensuring

equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, religious, or social backgrounds. Banks (2019) emphasizes that multicultural education involves the restructuring of curricula, teaching practices, and institutional policies to recognize cultural diversity and promote social justice. Similarly, Nieto (2017) argues that its aim extends beyond academic achievement to include the reduction of discrimination, stereotypes, and structural inequality through inclusive pedagogy.

Within this theoretical framework, multicultural education is increasingly viewed as a mechanism for fostering inclusivity, intercultural dialogue, and democratic participation in culturally diverse societies. In the Ukrainian context, it is interpreted not only as a response to migration processes but also as an important instrument for strengthening social cohesion and promoting mutual cultural understanding among learners (Sikorska, 2023). Historically, Ukraine has been home to numerous national minorities whose educational needs have required institutional recognition and linguistic accommodation. Contemporary reforms increasingly emphasize learner-centered and inclusive approaches aimed at balancing minority rights with national cohesion, as reflected in the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), which guarantees minority language rights while ensuring proficiency in Ukrainian as the state language.

A key dimension of contemporary literature on multicultural education concerns intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which has become increasingly significant due to globalization, migration, and international academic mobility. The concept reflects a shift from purely linguistic proficiency toward the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. According to Byram (1997), ICC encompasses not only language skills but also cultural awareness, empathy, openness, interpretative abilities, and the capacity to negotiate meaning in intercultural contexts. Deardorff (2006) further conceptualizes intercultural competence as a dynamic and ongoing developmental process involving attitudes, knowledge, reflection, and communicative behavior.

Recent studies emphasize that intercultural competence cannot be developed through theoretical instruction alone, but requires experiential and reflective learning approaches (Wibowo et al., 2024). Authentic interaction, culturally responsive pedagogy, and practice-oriented

communication are therefore considered essential in multicultural educational environments (Kuffuor et al., 2024). In higher education, intercultural competence is increasingly associated with students' readiness for professional communication in diverse and international contexts.

In classroom practice, intercultural communicative competence is particularly relevant because students regularly encounter peers from different cultural backgrounds, creating natural conditions for intercultural learning. Such environments provide opportunities for the development of tolerance, empathy, and collaborative skills, while also encouraging critical reflection on cultural differences.

In Ukraine, the growing presence of learners from migrant backgrounds, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and national minorities has further intensified the need for pedagogical approaches that support intercultural understanding and social inclusion.

Closely related to this is the role of foreign language education, which has increasingly adopted intercultural approaches. Modern language teaching extends beyond grammar and vocabulary acquisition and now emphasizes authentic communication, global citizenship, and cultural awareness. Educational materials such as films, podcasts, interviews, and digital communication tools are widely integrated into instruction to strengthen learners' intercultural competence and communicative confidence.

Another important strand of literature focuses on bilingual education, particularly in regions with concentrated minority populations. Bilingual education is widely recognized not only as a linguistic practice but also as a mechanism for identity preservation and social inclusion. Cummins (2000) argues that bilingual education supports cognitive development, enhances linguistic flexibility, and facilitates the transfer of skills between languages. At the same time, it enables minority learners to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage while acquiring proficiency in the state language necessary for broader social participation.

In Ukraine, bilingual and multilingual instruction is particularly relevant in regions inhabited by Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Bulgarian, and Crimean Tatar communities. In such contexts, schools often combine instruction in Ukrainian with minority languages, thereby supporting both cultural continuity and societal integration. Research further suggests

that bilingual intercultural education functions as a tool for fostering dialogue between cultural groups and strengthening educational inclusion (Bartosh & Myhalyna, 2023). At the same time, multilingual approaches are widely recognized at the European level as contributing to democratic participation and linguistic sustainability (Council of Europe, 2022).

However, bilingual education also remains a subject of debate, particularly regarding the balance between minority language preservation and sufficient proficiency in the state language. Consequently, successful implementation requires carefully designed curricula, adequate teacher preparation, and supportive institutional frameworks.

Recent scholarship further highlights the growing importance of multimodal learning environments in multicultural education. Multimodality refers to the integration of various forms of communication, including written text, speech, images, video, audio, and digital technologies, to enhance learning processes (Kress, 2010). Such approaches are particularly beneficial in linguistically diverse classrooms, as they accommodate different learning styles and levels of language proficiency. Mayer (2021) argues that combining visual and verbal materials significantly improves comprehension and learner engagement, especially among multilingual students.

Digital storytelling, blogs, podcasts, and online platforms have become increasingly important tools in this context, enabling learners not only to consume information but also to actively produce knowledge. Robin (2016) emphasizes that digital storytelling fosters self-expression, intercultural awareness, and reflective learning by allowing students to share personal and cultural narratives. In Ukraine, multimodal learning environments have gained particular importance during periods of war-related disruption and distance learning, where digital tools have played a crucial role in maintaining educational continuity and supporting displaced learners.

Finally, teacher preparedness is widely recognized as a key factor in the effectiveness of multicultural education. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, teachers are expected to act not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators, mediators, and designers of inclusive learning environments (Gay, 2018). This requires strong intercultural competence, methodological flexibility, and the ability to respond to students' linguistic and emotional needs.

UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that effective multicultural education depends on continuous teacher training in intercultural communication, inclusive pedagogy, and differentiated instruction. In Ukraine, although reforms and international programs such as Erasmus+ have expanded opportunities for professional development, many teachers still face challenges in adapting to culturally diverse classrooms. These include limited training, insufficient resources, and difficulties in addressing the psychological needs of displaced learners.

Despite growing scholarly attention to multicultural education, research remains limited regarding its practical implementation in foreign language education and teacher training within the Ukrainian context. This study addresses this gap by examining the development of multicultural educational environments in Ukraine under conditions of migration, social transformation, and European integration.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative theoretical research design aimed at examining the role of immigrants and national minorities in the development of the multicultural educational space of Ukraine. Considering the multidimensional nature of multicultural education, the study applies an interdisciplinary approach combining perspectives from educational studies, intercultural communication, multilingual education, inclusive pedagogy, and social integration (OECD, 2022).

The methodological foundation of this research is based on qualitative content analysis, comparative analysis, document analysis, and descriptive-analytical interpretation. These methods were selected due to their suitability for examining complex socio-educational phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone and require interpretation of meanings, policies, and pedagogical practices.

Qualitative content analysis was systematically applied to examine scholarly literature related to multiculturalism, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), bilingual education, multimodal learning environments, and teacher preparedness in culturally diverse educational contexts. The analysis followed a thematic approach, in which key concepts, recurring arguments, and conceptual categories were identified, coded, and synthesized across the selected literature. This approach enabled the identification of major theoretical perspectives and

educational trends relevant to multicultural education in Ukraine (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2018).

In addition, comparative analysis was employed to compare Ukrainian educational approaches with broader European educational principles related to multiculturalism, inclusion, and multilingualism. Particular attention was paid to educational practices promoted by European institutions, including intercultural education, learner-centered instruction, and inclusive pedagogical strategies supported through international initiatives such as Erasmus+ and Council of Europe educational frameworks (Council of Europe, 2022; OECD, 2022). This comparison allowed for identifying both convergences and context-specific differences in policy implementation and pedagogical practice.

Document analysis was used to examine legislative and policy documents regulating multicultural and inclusive education in Ukraine. Special emphasis was placed on the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), which establishes the legal framework for balancing minority language rights with national educational cohesion. Official reports and policy recommendations from UNESCO and Ukrainian educational institutions were also analyzed to identify current priorities and challenges in multicultural education (UNESCO, 2020). This method provided a policy-level perspective on how multicultural education is institutionalized within the Ukrainian educational system.

The research further applies a descriptive-analytical method to interpret how immigrants, national minorities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) contribute to educational development through cultural diversity, bilingual practices, intercultural interaction, and pedagogical innovation. Particular attention is devoted to the emergence of multicultural classrooms, multimodal learning environments, and inclusive teaching strategies in response to contemporary social transformations. This analytical step integrates findings from both literature and policy analysis into a coherent conceptual interpretation.

The selection of sources was based on the criteria of academic relevance, methodological reliability, publication credibility, and direct relevance to multicultural educational processes. Priority was given to peer-reviewed academic publications, official legal documents, reports of international educational organizations, and educational policy resources available through recognized academic databases and institutional

platforms. The literature corpus primarily covers contemporary sources to ensure relevance to current educational transformations in Ukraine and Europe.

At the same time, several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. Since the research is primarily theoretical and analytical in nature, it does not include empirical fieldwork, surveys, or statistical data collection among teachers or students. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect the interpretation and synthesis of existing scholarly literature and official educational documents. Therefore, the results should be understood as conceptual and analytical rather than empirically generalizable.

Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of the role of immigrants and national minorities in shaping the multicultural educational environment of Ukraine and provides a theoretical basis for further empirical investigation.

The following section presents the results of the analysis and discusses the role of immigrants and national minorities in the modernization of Ukrainian education, focusing on multicultural classrooms, bilingual education, intercultural communicative competence, multimodal learning environments, teacher preparedness, and contemporary educational challenges.

Results and Discussion

The study demonstrates that the multicultural educational space of Ukraine has been historically shaped by the long-term coexistence of diverse national minorities, including Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, Bulgarians, Crimean Tatars, Moldovans, and Greeks (Banks, 2019). Their presence has contributed to the development of culturally diverse educational traditions, the preservation of linguistic identities, and the establishment of multicultural learning environments in different regions of the country. Rather than functioning solely as a demographic characteristic, this diversity constitutes an important structural component of Ukraine's educational system.

In the contemporary context, migration processes and internal displacement caused by geopolitical instability have significantly intensified the cultural and linguistic diversity of educational institutions (UNESCO, 2020). As a result, schools and universities increasingly

operate as multilingual and multicultural environments in which students bring different educational backgrounds, cultural experiences, and communicative practices into the learning process.

Immigrants and national minorities contribute to educational development in several key ways. First, they play an important role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage through language maintenance, cultural traditions, and community-based educational practices (Cummins, 2000). Educational institutions attended by minority students often function as spaces, where cultural identity is maintained and strengthened across generations.

Secondly, cultural diversity stimulates pedagogical transformation. Teachers working in multicultural classrooms are required to adapt instructional strategies, modify communication approaches, and implement inclusive pedagogical practices (Gay, 2018). This leads to a gradual shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more flexible, learner-centered, and culturally responsive teaching models.

In addition, everyday interaction among students from diverse cultural backgrounds contributes to the development of intercultural communicative competence. Learners actively engage in dialogue, collaboration, and negotiation of meaning, which fosters empathy, tolerance, and the ability to interact effectively in culturally diverse environments (Byram, 1997).

The research also indicates that linguistic diversity within classrooms enhances students' cognitive and communicative development. Multilingual environments support the development of linguistic flexibility and create favorable conditions for foreign language acquisition and intercultural awareness (Council of Europe, 2022).

At the same time, the study identifies several challenges associated with the integration of immigrants and national minorities into the educational system. These include language barriers, unequal access to educational resources, and difficulties related to social and psychological adaptation (UNESCO, 2020). Such challenges may affect students' academic performance and participation, particularly in the early stages of integration.

Despite these challenges, immigrants and national minorities should be understood not only as groups requiring support but also as active contributors to the modernization of Ukrainian education. Their presence

fosters inclusivity, pedagogical innovation, and intercultural openness within educational environments (Nieto, 2017). Overall, immigrants and national minorities play a transformative role in shaping a more inclusive, multilingual, and pedagogically innovative educational environment in Ukraine.

The analysis demonstrates that multicultural classrooms in Ukraine are increasingly characterized by the coexistence of learners with diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. These classrooms however can be defined not only by demographic diversity but also by the continuous interaction of different communicative styles, values, and learning experiences (Gay, 2018).

Thus, such diversity has contributed to a gradual transformation of traditional instructional models. Conventional teacher-centered approaches are increasingly being replaced by more flexible, learner-centered pedagogies that emphasize inclusion, participation, and individual learning needs.

The study further reveals that differentiated instruction has become one of the key strategies for managing diversity in multicultural classrooms. Teachers adjust content, tasks, and assessment methods to accommodate varying levels of language proficiency, prior knowledge, and cultural adaptation needs (Tomlinson, 2017). This contributes to more equitable learning opportunities and increased student engagement.

In addition, project-based learning supports collaboration among students from different cultural backgrounds. Through joint tasks and group projects, learners develop both academic skills and intercultural communicative competence by engaging in dialogue, negotiation, and shared problem-solving (Thomas, 2000).

The analysis also indicates that multimodal teaching strategies have become increasingly relevant in multicultural educational contexts. The integration of visual, auditory, and digital resources enhances comprehension and participation, particularly for multilingual learners, by reducing language-related barriers and supporting multiple learning styles (Mayer, 2021).

Furthermore, multicultural classrooms function as important spaces for the development of intercultural communicative competence. Regular interaction among students fosters empathy, tolerance, and the ability to understand and respect cultural differences (Byram, 1997).

At the same time, the research reveals several challenges, including insufficient teacher preparedness, limited availability of culturally responsive materials, unequal access to digital technologies, and psychological adaptation difficulties among immigrant and displaced learners (UNESCO, 2020).

Overall, the results suggest that multicultural classrooms in Ukraine are evolving into inclusive and adaptive learning environments where diversity functions as a pedagogical resource rather than a barrier. A clearer understanding of multicultural education in Ukraine can be achieved through examining specific contextual examples that illustrate how educational institutions respond to linguistic and cultural diversity in practice.

One relevant example is the implementation of bilingual education in Western Ukraine, particularly in regions such as Zakarpattia, where Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak minorities live in compact communities. In these schools, instruction is often delivered in both Ukrainian and minority languages. This model allows students to maintain their linguistic identity while ensuring integration into the national education system. According to the Council of Europe, such bilingual models are considered effective tools for promoting both social cohesion and linguistic diversity in multilingual societies (Council of Europe, 2022).

Another significant case is the educational inclusion of Crimean Tatar learners, especially after the annexation of Crimea. Schools and online platforms have increasingly incorporated Crimean Tatar language courses and cultural content to preserve identity and support displaced communities. This form of education demonstrates how schools can function as cultural preservation spaces in conditions of forced migration and displacement. A third example relates to internally displaced persons (IDPs) after 2014 and especially after 2022. Many Ukrainian schools, particularly in central and western regions, have had to rapidly adapt to the influx of students from conflict-affected areas.

Teachers often implement flexible curricula, psychological support systems, and differentiated instruction to support students facing trauma, educational disruption, and linguistic adaptation challenges (UNICEF, 2023). These examples demonstrate that multicultural education in Ukraine is not theoretical but deeply embedded in real social and political

contexts, where education becomes a mechanism for both integration and cultural preservation.

Bilingual education occupies an important place within the multicultural educational space of Ukraine, particularly in regions where national minorities live compactly. Such educational programs enable students to receive instruction in both Ukrainian and their native minority language, thereby supporting cultural continuity while simultaneously facilitating integration into broader Ukrainian society.

This idea is supported by the fact that in multicultural educational contexts, bilingualism is increasingly viewed not merely as a linguistic practice but also as an important mechanism for preserving cultural identity, promoting inclusion, and strengthening social cohesion (Cummins, 2000).

The primary objective of bilingual education is to maintain a balance between two equally significant goals: the preservation of minority identity and successful participation in national educational life. Students belonging to minority communities – including Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, Bulgarians, and Crimean Tatars – are provided opportunities to maintain their linguistic heritage, cultural traditions, historical memory, and sense of belonging while simultaneously acquiring proficiency in Ukrainian as the state language. Such linguistic competence is particularly important for access to higher education, employment opportunities, and broader civic participation (Law of Ukraine on Education, 2017).

Research indicates that bilingual educational environments often contribute positively to students' cognitive and linguistic development. Exposure to multiple languages enhances cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, metalinguistic awareness, and communicative adaptability. Multilingual learners frequently demonstrate stronger analytical thinking skills due to their ability to navigate different linguistic systems and cultural perspectives (Cummins, 2000).

In practice, bilingual instruction in Ukrainian schools increasingly adopts learner-centered and culturally responsive approaches. A typical bilingual lesson often combines Ukrainian with minority languages depending on students' language proficiency levels and educational objectives. Teachers frequently integrate authentic educational resources, including videos, podcasts, digital presentations, and culturally relevant

materials, to create meaningful connections between language acquisition and real-life communication. Comparative cultural discussions, collaborative projects, and translation activities are also widely used to strengthen intercultural understanding and student engagement.

Collaborative learning constitutes another important feature of bilingual education.

Students frequently participate in group discussions, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary assignments requiring communication across linguistic and cultural differences. Such activities contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence by encouraging learners to negotiate meanings, express perspectives, and cooperate with peers from different backgrounds (Byram, 1997).

Equally important is the role of bilingual education in strengthening students' sense of cultural recognition and belonging. When minority languages and cultural traditions are visibly represented within schools, students often experience increased motivation, emotional well-being, academic participation, and self-confidence. Educational inclusion becomes more effective when learners perceive that their linguistic and cultural identities are respected rather than marginalized (Nieto, 2017).

Nevertheless, bilingual education in Ukraine also faces several challenges. One of the most frequently discussed issues concerns balancing minority language preservation with sufficient proficiency in Ukrainian as the state language. Some students may initially encounter difficulties adapting to instruction conducted partially in Ukrainian, particularly in communities where daily exposure to the state language is limited.

Consequently, effective bilingual education requires carefully designed curricula, differentiated instruction, and additional language support mechanisms. Political and social debates surrounding language policy also influence the implementation of bilingual education. Discussions regarding the appropriate balance between minority language rights and national educational cohesion continue to shape educational reforms in Ukraine. Despite these challenges, contemporary educational discourse increasingly supports balanced bilingual approaches that protect minority rights while strengthening social integration and democratic coexistence.

The growing implementation of bilingual educational models demonstrates that linguistic diversity can function as an important educational resource rather than an obstacle. Alongside bilingual instruction, contemporary educational environments employ innovative multimodal approaches capable of supporting communication, engagement, and intercultural learning in culturally diverse classrooms.

The increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of Ukrainian classrooms has encouraged educators to adopt multimodal learning environments as an important pedagogical strategy for supporting inclusive and effective education. Multimodality refers to the integration of multiple forms of communication – including written texts, spoken language, images, videos, audio materials, digital technologies, and interactive platforms – within the educational process. Such environments are particularly valuable in multicultural educational settings because they address different learning preferences, language proficiency levels, and communicative needs (Kress, 2010).

In multicultural classrooms, multimodal learning environments create opportunities for more accessible and inclusive educational experiences. Since students may differ considerably in terms of linguistic competence, educational background, and cultural experiences, relying exclusively on text-based instruction may limit participation and understanding. By combining visual, auditory, and interactive resources, teachers can support learners more effectively and reduce barriers related to language acquisition or cultural unfamiliarity (Mayer, 2021).

One of the major strengths of multimodal education lies in its capacity to strengthen intercultural communication and cultural understanding. Through videos, podcasts, interviews, films, blogs, and digital platforms, students are exposed to authentic cultural narratives, accents, communication styles, and social experiences. Such exposure allows learners to develop intercultural awareness, empathy, and openness toward diversity while simultaneously reducing stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings (Byram, 1997).

Multimodal approaches have proven particularly beneficial in language education. Authentic linguistic input combining spoken language with visual context, gestures, and real communication situations creates more meaningful language-learning experiences. Educational tools such as podcasts, video interviews, online communication tasks,

and virtual discussions help students improve pronunciation, listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and communicative confidence while also strengthening intercultural communicative competence.

Digital storytelling has emerged as one of the most powerful tools within multicultural education. Through digital stories, presentations, multimedia narratives, and reflective blogs, students are encouraged to express their personal experiences, migration histories, cultural traditions, and identities. This process transforms learners from passive recipients of information into active creators of educational content. As Robin (2016) argues, digital storytelling supports creativity, self-reflection, linguistic development, and intercultural awareness while fostering empathy among classmates.

Educational blogs also play an important role in supporting cultural identity and communication. Blogs create spaces where students can share opinions, cultural perspectives, and experiences while interacting with peers from different backgrounds. Through reflective writing and digital interaction, students strengthen both language competence and intercultural sensitivity. Moreover, such activities help create emotionally supportive learning communities where diverse identities are recognized and respected.

Another important advantage of multimodal learning environments concerns their contribution to inclusive education. Different students learn through different modalities: some respond better to visual materials, others to spoken explanations, collaborative activities, or interactive technologies. Multimodal instruction therefore enables teachers to accommodate diverse learning styles and educational needs more effectively, particularly in classrooms involving immigrants, minority students, and internally displaced learners.

In Ukraine, the significance of multimodal learning has increased considerably during periods of educational disruption caused by war and displacement. Online platforms, virtual classrooms, educational applications, and digital communication tools became essential for maintaining educational continuity, especially for vulnerable populations and displaced students. These technologies enabled many learners to remain connected to educational communities despite geographical mobility and social instability (UNESCO, 2020).

At the same time, successful implementation of multimodal education depends heavily on teacher preparedness and technological

accessibility. Unequal access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and educational technologies may limit opportunities for some learners, particularly in vulnerable or rural communities. Furthermore, teachers require specialized professional competencies to integrate multimedia resources effectively, moderate online communication, and assess digital educational projects.

Overall, multimodal learning environments represent an important pedagogical innovation that strengthens inclusion, learner engagement, intercultural communication, and educational flexibility. By integrating diverse communicative forms and technologies, multicultural classrooms increasingly become dynamic spaces where cultural diversity functions as a valuable educational resource promoting creativity, collaboration, and social understanding.

Teacher preparedness represents one of the most important factors determining the effectiveness of multicultural education. As Ukrainian classrooms become culturally and linguistically diverse, teachers are expected to perform roles extending beyond traditional knowledge transmission. Thus, modern educators increasingly function as facilitators, mediators, mentors, and cultural intermediaries responsible for creating inclusive, respectful, and psychologically supportive educational environments (Gay, 2018). The growing presence of immigrants, national minorities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has significantly transformed teachers' professional responsibilities. Educators must increasingly respond to linguistic diversity, differences in educational backgrounds, cultural expectations, and students' varying social experiences.

Consequently, multicultural classrooms require not only methodological flexibility but also intercultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt teaching practices according to learners' individual needs.

One of the key competencies required for successful multicultural education is intercultural communicative competence (ICC). According to Byram (1997), ICC refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals from different cultural backgrounds through a combination of linguistic skills, intercultural awareness, empathy, openness, and critical cultural understanding. In educational settings, ICC helps both teachers and students navigate cultural

differences while fostering respectful communication and mutual understanding.

The development of intercultural communicative competence has become relevant within Ukrainian education due to growing multiculturalism, migration, and international cooperation. Students regularly interact with peers representing diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural communities, creating opportunities for authentic intercultural learning. Through classroom interaction, learners develop tolerance, empathy, flexibility, and the ability to negotiate meanings across cultural boundaries.

Foreign language education plays an especially important role in fostering ICC. Contemporary language teaching increasingly emphasizes authentic communication rather than mechanical memorization of grammar and vocabulary. Educational materials such as films, podcasts, interviews, online discussions, and intercultural exchange activities expose students to real communication styles, accents, values, and cultural perspectives. Such approaches help learners develop communicative confidence while broadening their global awareness (Byram, 1997).

Teachers support the development of intercultural competence through various interactive and learner-centered methods, including group discussions, collaborative projects, comparative cultural studies, debates, simulations, and role-playing activities. These methods encourage students to critically reflect on stereotypes, cultural assumptions, and social differences while promoting empathy and respectful dialogue. Project-based learning, in particular, creates opportunities for students to cooperate across cultural boundaries and develop communication skills through shared problem-solving experiences.

At the same time, teacher preparedness for multicultural education remains an important challenge within Ukraine. Many educators still report insufficient training in intercultural pedagogy, differentiated instruction, inclusive classroom management, and psychological support for vulnerable students. Teachers working with displaced learners or immigrant populations may also encounter challenges related to trauma-sensitive teaching, language adaptation, and social integration (UNESCO, 2020).

Programs such as Erasmus+ support academic mobility, professional exchange, intercultural dialogue, and teacher training opportunities.

Through participation in international educational projects, educators gain exposure to innovative pedagogical methods and multicultural educational practices that strengthen their professional competencies and global perspectives. Such initiatives contribute significantly to the modernization and Europeanization of Ukrainian education.

Nevertheless, successful multicultural education depends not only on individual teacher competencies but also on broader institutional support. Continuous professional development, inclusive educational policies, methodological resources, and psychological support systems remain essential for enabling teachers to work effectively in culturally diverse classrooms.

The growing emphasis on intercultural competence and teacher preparedness reflects broader educational transformations taking place within Ukrainian society. However, despite significant progress, multicultural education continues to encounter various institutional, social, and political challenges that influence its implementation.

Despite considerable progress in the development of multicultural education, Ukrainian educational institutions continue to face numerous challenges related to social inequality, migration, linguistic diversity, technological access, and geopolitical instability. Addressing these issues remains essential for ensuring equal educational opportunities and successful social integration in increasingly multicultural learning environments. One of the most significant challenges concerns language barriers. Students from immigrant, minority, or displaced backgrounds may experience difficulties mastering

Ukrainian as the primary language of instruction, particularly during the early stages of adaptation. Limited proficiency in the state language may negatively affect academic performance, communication, and participation in classroom activities. Consequently, schools increasingly require bilingual support systems, differentiated language instruction, and individualized educational approaches (Law of Ukraine on Education, 2017).

Another important challenge relates to teacher preparedness and professional training. Although multicultural classrooms increasingly characterize Ukrainian education, many teachers continue to lack specialized competencies necessary for working effectively in culturally diverse environments. As a result, insufficient training in intercultural

communication, inclusive pedagogy, conflict-sensitive education, and trauma-informed teaching may limit educators' ability to respond effectively to students' diverse social and emotional needs (Gay, 2018).

Educational inequality and unequal access to resources also remain important concerns. Differences in technological infrastructure, internet connectivity, and availability of digital devices became particularly visible during periods of distance learning caused by war and displacement. Students from vulnerable communities, rural regions, or displaced families often encounter additional obstacles to educational participation, thereby increasing risks of educational exclusion (UNESCO, 2020).

Curriculum limitations further complicate the implementation of multicultural education. Educational materials do not always adequately represent the cultural diversity of Ukrainian society or sufficiently integrate minority perspectives into learning content. Limited representation may negatively influence students' sense of belonging and cultural recognition, particularly among minority learners.

Psychological and emotional challenges also require considerable attention. Students affected by migration, displacement, or military conflict may experience anxiety, social isolation, identity-related stress, or trauma. Schools increasingly function not only as academic institutions but also as important spaces of emotional support and social stabilization.

Consequently, educational systems require stronger psychological services, inclusive classroom strategies, and trauma-sensitive educational practices. Despite these challenges, the future prospects of multicultural education in Ukraine remain largely positive. Educational reforms increasingly emphasize inclusion, learner-centered instruction, intercultural dialogue, and equal educational access.

Ongoing cooperation with European educational institutions and participation in international initiatives such as Erasmus+ continue to strengthen the internationalization of Ukrainian education and facilitate the exchange of multicultural educational practices.

The continued development of digital and multimodal learning environments is also expected to shape the future of multicultural education. Online communication tools, multimedia technologies, virtual learning environments, and artificial intelligence may create new opportunities for intercultural interaction, collaboration, and

educational accessibility. Such innovations may further strengthen student engagement and support learners with diverse educational needs.

Teacher professional development will remain a particularly important priority in the future. Modern educators will increasingly require competencies extending beyond subject knowledge, including intercultural communication, emotional intelligence, digital literacy, and inclusive pedagogical strategies. Continuous training opportunities will therefore remain essential for responding effectively to changing educational realities.

Ultimately, the future of multicultural education in Ukraine depends on the country's ability to balance cultural diversity with social cohesion. Educational institutions will continue seeking ways to preserve minority identities while simultaneously strengthening democratic values, intercultural understanding, and national unity. Under such conditions, diversity may increasingly be recognized not as a challenge but as a valuable educational resource capable of enriching both learning processes and broader social development.

When compared to European countries such as Poland, Germany, and Finland, Ukraine demonstrates both similarities and structural differences in implementing multicultural education. In Germany, for example, multicultural education is strongly institutionalized through integration courses that combine language acquisition with civic education. Immigrant students receive systematic support in German language learning as a prerequisite for full educational participation. The German model emphasizes structured state-funded integration mechanisms and standardized language assessment frameworks (OECD, 2022).

In Finland, multicultural education is embedded in a highly inclusive school system where students are supported through individualized learning plans and strong psychological services. The Finnish approach prioritizes equality, student well-being, and early intervention, particularly for migrant learners.

Compared to these systems, Ukraine's model is still in transition, balancing between:

- preservation of minority languages;
- strengthening the Ukrainian state language;
- and adapting to war-related displacement and migration.

Unlike Western European systems with long-established integration infrastructures, Ukraine is currently developing its multicultural

education framework in response to rapid demographic and geopolitical changes. However, its alignment with European educational standards through programs such as Erasmus+ demonstrates a clear trajectory toward harmonization with EU practices (European Commission, 2023).

The analysis of multicultural education in Ukraine highlights several important implications for educational policy and institutional reform. First, there is a clear need for systematic teacher training programs in intercultural education. Teachers should receive continuous professional development focused on intercultural communicative competence, inclusive pedagogy, and trauma-informed teaching strategies. Without such training, the effectiveness of multicultural classrooms remains limited.

Second, educational policy should further support the development of multilingual and bilingual education models, particularly in regions with significant minority populations. These models should ensure balanced development of both Ukrainian language proficiency and minority language preservation.

Third, there is a growing need for investment in digital infrastructure. Multimodal and digital learning environments have proven essential, especially during wartime and remote learning conditions. Ensuring equal access to technology is critical for reducing educational inequality among displaced and rural students.

Fourth, Ukraine should continue strengthening cooperation with international organizations such as UNESCO and the European Union to align its multicultural education strategies with global best practices (UNESCO, 2020).

Finally, psychological support systems in schools should be expanded to address trauma, displacement stress, and adaptation difficulties among vulnerable learners. This is particularly relevant in the context of ongoing conflict and internal migration.

Conclusions

The analysis of Ukraine's multicultural educational space demonstrates that cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity has become an integral and transformative factor in the development of the national education system. Historically shaped by the coexistence of multiple national minorities and further intensified by contemporary migration processes and internal displacement, Ukrainian education increasingly

functions within a complex multicultural reality. In this context, educational institutions perform not only a knowledge transmission function but also serve as key spaces for fostering social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and democratic values.

The findings indicate that immigrants and national minorities play an important role in enriching the educational environment. Their presence contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, the development of multilingual competencies, and the strengthening of intercultural communicative competence among students. In everyday classroom interaction, learners develop essential social and communicative skills such as empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and the ability to engage constructively with cultural diversity in both national and global contexts.

A significant outcome of multicultural education in Ukraine is the gradual transformation of pedagogical practice. Increasing diversity in student populations has led to the wider implementation of learner-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, bilingual education models, project-based learning, and multimodal learning environments. These developments reflect a systemic shift from standardized instruction toward more flexible, inclusive, and culturally responsive educational practices.

At the same time, the study identifies several persistent challenges. These include language barriers experienced by minority and displaced students, unequal access to educational and digital resources, insufficient teacher preparedness for multicultural classrooms, limited representation of cultural diversity in curricula, and psychological difficulties faced by learners affected by migration and conflict. These challenges directly influence educational participation and achievement and require targeted institutional responses.

Addressing these issues requires coordinated educational policies, continuous professional development for teachers, and strengthened psychological and social support systems within educational institutions. In particular, teacher training in intercultural communication and inclusive pedagogy remains a critical factor for the successful implementation of multicultural education.

Despite these challenges, the future prospects of multicultural education in Ukraine remain positive. Ongoing educational reforms, participation in international programs such as Erasmus+, and the

growing integration of digital and multimodal learning technologies contribute to the modernization and Europeanization of the education system. These processes support the development of more adaptive, inclusive, and interculturally oriented learning environments.

Overall, multicultural education in Ukraine should be understood not merely as a response to diversity but as a strategic direction for educational development. Recognizing cultural diversity as an educational resource enhances the capacity of the education system to promote social cohesion, democratic values, and global competence among future generations.

At the same time, this study is limited by its theoretical nature and reliance on literature and document analysis. Further empirical research involving teachers, students, and representatives of minority communities is necessary to gain deeper insight into the practical implementation and effectiveness of multicultural education in Ukraine.

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