

Published by the decision of the Scientific Council  
of Khachatur Abovian  
Armenian State Pedagogical University



Department of Philosophy and Logic  
named after Academician Gevorg Brutian



# W I S D O M

4(24), 2022



*WISDOM is covered in Clarivate Analytics' Emerging Sources  
Citation Index service*

ASPU Publication

YEREVAN – 2022

DOI: 10.24234/wisdom.v24i4.941

## THE PHENOMENON OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Rakhmat KARIMOV <sup>1,\*</sup> | Oleg NAUMENKO <sup>2</sup> | Kamola SAIDOVA <sup>3</sup> |  
 Ruslan ELMURATOV <sup>4</sup> | Rauf BEKBAEV <sup>5</sup>

1 National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

2 National University of Science and Technology (MISIS), Moscow, Russia

3 Branch of Astrakhan State Technical University in the Tashkent region, Tashkent region, Uzbekistan

4 Professional Development Center of the Management Development Institute of Singapore in Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

5 Tashkent International University of Education; Tashkent University of Information Technologies named after Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

### \*Correspondence

Rakhmat KARIMOV, Sarabuston 17, Tashkent, 100031, Uzbekistan  
 E-mail: rakhmat.r.karimov@gmail.com

*Abstract:* The article discusses the principles of coordination of intercultural philosophy with the main vectors of development of modern spheres of education. The mechanisms of the formation of intercultural philosophy since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been investigated. The etymological analysis of the concepts of “dialogue”, “discussion”, “contact”, “interaction”, “polylogue”, “speech of many” and “multiple contacts” is carried out. The authors analyze the processes of correlation, mutual influence and communication of cross-cultural discourse in the context of comparative philosophy and synthesis of cultures both from a general theoretical and methodological perspective. Special attention is paid to the prospects of studying the phenomenon of intercultural and interregional interactions of the philosophy of education, comparative and intercultural philosophy.

*Keywords:* education, culture, society, philosophy of education, comparative philosophy, interculturality, intercultural philosophy.

### Introduction

The phenomenon of education is an important object of research in various sciences, because it is education that is the basic foundation that ensures the development of the individual, as well as society and its institutions. Philosophy seeks to comprehend all spheres of human activity, including education. The philosophy of education itself acquired an independent status in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the USA and today it is defined “*as a philosophical reflection on the nature, aims and problems of education*” (Kuzanyan, 2017, p. 107). It is important to note

that when interpreting the phenomenon of education through the prism of philosophical reflection, one should take into account the *cultural context* in which the educational process is carried out. Education is a place of contact between different cultures, their interaction and communication. And here we are witnessing the process of *intercultural dialogue in education* and in this regard, an *intercultural philosophical approach* is being actualized, which considers all cultures as equal among themselves and at the same time creates conditions for their effective and mutually beneficial interaction while preserving the uniqueness of each culture.

## The Genesis of Intercultural Philosophy

In the philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, special attention is paid to cross-cultural studies, an attempt to *compare Eastern and Western civilization*. In this regard, such a new direction as comparative philosophy is being formed, the basis of the methodology of which, as defined by P. Masson-Oursel (1926), is an *analogy* (p. 37). It is through the method of analogy that comparative philosophy searches for similarities and differences between the cultures of the East and the West. From this point of view L. Skof (2008) notes that comparative philosophy is a *“universal positive science of analogy”* (p. 123). At the same time, P. Masson-Oursel’s (1926) remark that *“there is no truth that is not relative”* (p. 37) is interesting. Proceeding from this, we can say that comparative philosophy, according to Masson-Oursel’s (1926) idea, should not give priority to one or another culture, since the monopoly of any culture in the spiritual life of mankind is unacceptable (p. 37). These motives, which were set by P. Masson-Oursel, are important not only for the development of comparative philosophy, but also for the emergence of intercultural philosophy. However, his methodological approach in further comparative philosophical research has undergone changes. Thus, one of the founders of comparative philosophy, P. T. Raju (1962), believed that *“the subject of comparative studies is the comparative study of various traditions, the basis of which should be a person and his life”* (p. 270). At the same time, he means that *“the goal of comparative philosophy is a cultural synthesis that implies not domination, but development, not imposition, but assimilation, not narrowing of the worldview, but its expansion”* (Raju, 1962, p. 288). Thus, P. T. Raju shifts the methodology of comparative philosophy towards the synthesis of cultures, which will be expanded by Ch. A. Moore (2021) into the idea of a *“substantial synthesis of cultures”* and a *“world synthesis of philosophies”* (p. 5). Within the framework of comparative philosophy, there is a desire for a dialogue of cultures through their synthesis. M. Siderits (2017) notes that for in order to understand another culture, it is necessary to fully enter into it, the ability to think like a native of this culture (p. 3). Therefore, within the framework of comparative philosophy, the approach of

*“fusion philosophy”* is formed, which was criticized by M. Levine (2016), according to whom, *“fusion philosophy”* does not contribute to the convergence of different philosophies and approaches, it substitutes views and positions (p. 237). It follows from this that cultural synthesis, as a methodological approach of comparative philosophy, loses its relevance, since the very expression *“fusion”* implies precisely the connection, the absorption of one thing by another. In the context of culture, this means the absorption of one culture by another, which in itself leads to the loss of cultural identity, Westernization or Easternization as a consequence of globalization.

In modern comparative philosophy, an attempt is being made to form a new *“comparative philosophy without borders”* in order *“to open up ways for penetration, if not fusion”* (Chakrabarti & Weber, 2016, p. 1). However, we believe that this approach inherits the ideas of cultural synthesis in certain way. At one time, S. Radhakrishnan, J. Santayana and J. Dewey on the pages of the journal *“Philosophy of East and West”* opposed the idea of the synthesis of cultures, rejected the idea of their uniformity, indicating that in one way or another intercultural connection are observed in the historical process (Dewey et al., 1951, pp. 3-5). On the basis of these disputes, a new direction is being formed in comparative studies – *intercultural philosophy*.

The intercultural philosophy was formed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The founders of this trend are such thinkers as R. A. Mall, H. Kimmerle, R. Fernet-Betancourt, F. M. Wimmer and others. Unlike comparative philosophy, intercultural philosophy rejects the possibility of cultural synthesis and calls for intercultural dialogue based on equality and pluralism of cultures. The absorption of one culture by another is unacceptable for interculturalism. M. Stepanyants (2017) notes the revision of the Eurocentric position that has taken place (p. 21), as a result of which intercultural philosophy *“aims to comprehend and solve, in addition to purely philosophical, the most important global problems through dialogue as a means of relieving tension, achieving mutual understanding and mutual respect, finding new ways to jointly solve common problems”* (Stepanyants, 2015, p. 157).

## Fundamental Principles of Intercultural Philosophy

R. A. Mall (2000) writes that *every philosophy by its nature must be intercultural* (p. 9). The very expression “intercultural”, as Hsueh-I Chen points out, has the meaning of “being between” (Hsueh-I Chen, 2014, p. 72). This also means that the intercultural philosophical approach does not try to establish a priority culture, recognizing all cultures as equally important and unique in their own way. According to R. A. Mall (2000), interculturalism is also a “*mental and moral category*” (p. 4). V. G. Furtardo (2004) believes that this category should be understood in the context of pluralism (p. 4). Hence follows the basic principle of intercultural philosophy – *tolerant pluralism*, which is also complemented by the principle of “*cognitive modesty*”, which today has an interdisciplinary character (Stepanyants, 2018, p. 195). M. Stepanyants (2018) notes that from R. A. Mall’s point of view, cognitive modesty is “the recognition that the Western type of philosophizing is not the only one. This is a reflection that is not limited by national or civilizational borders” (p. 196). An important principle of intercultural philosophy is also the principle of “*unity without uniformity*”, proposed by R. A. Mall (2014, p. 69). This postulates that intercultural interaction, as well as the dialogue of cultures, should take place without reducing one culture to another, without merging traditions and values.

The central concept of intercultural philosophy, as well as comparative philosophy, is *intercultural dialogue*. However, unlike comparative philosophy, the dialogue of cultures in interculturalism is not understood in the context of the East-West dichotomy. Intercultural philosophy refuses such a classification of cultures, because it contradicts its fundamental principles. Also in this regard, the concept of “intercultural dialogue” in intercultural philosophy is expanded to “*intercultural polylogue*” (Wimmer, 2002). Semantically, “dialogue” means “conversation”, “contact” or “interaction”, while “polylogue” literally means “speech of many”, “multiple contacts”. D. Olu-Jacob (2014) notes that a philosopher engaged in intercultural studies considers dialogue and polylogue as a means of communicating with other cultures other than his own; he tries to understand another culture and extract

something positive from it for himself. Intercultural orientation seeks to give meaning and space to other cultures, to build bridges between them, while condemning ethnocentrism (p. 108). It is especially important to note that a real polylogue of cultures is being implemented in the environment of intercultural philosophical research, as American, European, Chinese, Indian and African studies are present here. The study of African cultures in intercultural studies is particularly relevant today. This shows that the intercultural philosophy is multipolar and is not limited by any framework. Also note that interculturalism is different from multiculturalism. R. A. Mall (2000) notes that multiculturalism tries to preserve the purity of each culture, but in reality, no culture is an absolute closed system and every culture interacts with other cultures (p. 14). In the historical process, cross-cultural ties are always traced, when one culture absorbs the traditions and values of another, but does not merge with it.

## Education and Interculturalism

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the era of intensive development of digital technologies and globalization, the phenomenon of education is influenced by a variety of factors, including culture, as well as artificial intelligence. The concept of “*artificial intelligence*” is firmly included in our life and, in the future, will actively influence all spheres of human life (Naumenko et al., 2021, p. 53), including education. Artificial intelligence is particularly important and relevant in the context of the COVID-2019 pandemic, when many social and cultural processes have been transferred to the virtual space.

Today researchers pay attention to the fact that the cultural content of the educational process is one of the factors of ensuring equality in education. For example, P. Bourdieu argued back in the 70s that the educational process affects children from different cultural groups differently (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, pp. 16-17). And today it is no less important and relevant to pay attention to the cultural context of education. Through the prism of a comparative philosophical approach, education will be considered as a meeting place of Eastern and Western cultures, however, ways of their synthesis will be sought. In the intercultural philosophical approach, we

can also consider education as a field of interaction and communication of cultures, but also their dialogue or polylogue. Interculturalism recognizes the uniqueness of each culture, the impossibility of reducing it to another. At the same time, conditions are being created for equal and equivalent interaction, because the voice of each culture is significant, but no less valuable than the other. For a more detailed understanding of the significance of the cultural context in education, we conducted a sociological survey among students and an expert interview with teachers with extensive experience in teaching.

The sociological survey among students covered 195 male and female respondents aged 18 and over, studying in various bachelor's degree (1-4 courses) and master's degree (1-2 courses). The interviewees were asked the following questions:

1. "Do you think the educational environment is a platform for interaction between representatives of different cultures?"

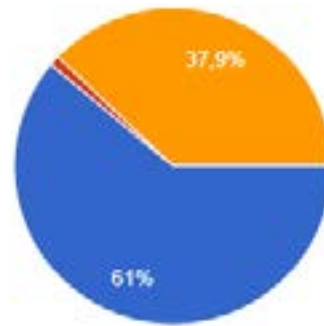
The overwhelming majority of respondents consider the educational environment as a platform for interaction between representatives of different cultures (87%), while 9.7% of respondents found it difficult to answer, and 2.6% of respondents gave a negative answer.



2. "In your opinion, should various events be held in educational institutions to strengthen intercultural ties (sports competitions, "Festival of Countries", "Friendship Festival", concerts, talent competition, etc.)?"

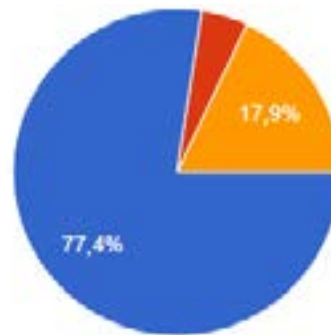
61% of respondents said that these activities should be carried out, while 37.9% of respondents believe that these activities should be carried out depending on the wishes of the majority of students. Only 2% of respondents expressed the

opinion that these events should not be held.



3. "How do you think the cultural plurality of the educational environment affects the quality of education?"

77.4% of respondents noted a positive impact, 17.9% of respondents believe that it has no impact and 4.6% of respondents noted a negative impact.



The results of the conducted sociological survey among students show that, for the most part, education is a platform for the interaction of cultures. At the same time, intercultural relations in educational institutions should be strengthened through a number of activities. In addition, cultural plurality, according to the majority of respondents, has a positive impact on the quality of education. The dynamics of negative responses remains minimal. Based on this, we can say that students understand what cultural plurality is and what is the significance of intercultural communication in such a phenomenon of social life as education.

The conducted expert interviews were attended by three experts leading professional pedagogical and research activities in various educational institutions. The composition of the expert

interview participants is as follows.

<i>Expert</i>	<i>Scientific degree</i>	<i>Teaching experience</i>	<i>Age</i>
Expert 1	DSc, Professor	32 years	53
Expert 2	PhD, Associate Professor	41 years	65
Expert 3	MSc	21 years	49

During the interview, first expert noted that the educational environment is a platform for intercultural interaction, a dialogue of cultures. However, knowledge is objective in nature, and it should be transmitted in a form free from the cultural context. Unification of students' clothing is not mandatory, the form of clothing should be free, convenient for students. Separate classes on education, culture, ethics and norms of behavior should not be conducted, as they are often purely formal in nature. But at the same time, according to the expert, various events presenting different cultures should be held in educational institutions, which will strengthen intercultural communication in the educational environment. In the course of his professional activity, the expert did not notice cases of discrimination based on cultural identity, but it is important to teach teachers anti-bullying and other methods of preventing such discrimination. Since knowledge is objective, the educational material does not necessarily have to take into account the cultural identity of each participant in the educational process. The language of instruction does not have any influence on the cultural identity of participants in the educational process.

The second expert also noted that the educational environment is a platform for intercultural interaction. However, cultural diversity should be taken into account depending on the subject taught. The unified form of clothing, according to the expert, is important, ensures equality and at the same time is aesthetic. Meanwhile students can be allowed to wear items of clothing or accessories that express their cultural identity. In an educational institution, according to the expert, it is mandatory to conduct classes on education, culture, ethics and norms of behavior, which will have a positive impact on the quality of the educational process. The expert also replied that intercultural exchange is promoted by various events presenting different cultures. Interestingly,

the expert noticed discrimination on the basis of cultural identity in the educational environment and such cases can be prevented through teaching teachers anti-bullying and other methods. The expert also noted that the cultural identity of participants in the educational process should be taken into account depending on the specific situation. The language of instruction has a positive effect on cultural identity through the fact that it provides an opportunity for direct acquaintance with another culture.

Third expert also agreed that the educational environment is also an environment of interaction between representatives of different cultures. The presented educational material should be adapted for all students-representatives of different cultures. According to the expert, a unified form of clothing is also necessary, but at the same time students can be allowed to wear clothes or accessories that express their cultural identification. Separate classes on education, culture, the development of ethics and norms of behavior should be conducted, because otherwise the quality of classes may deteriorate. Various events presenting different cultures should also be held in educational institutions, as this strengthens the intercultural dialogue. The expert does not note cases of discrimination on the basis of cultural identity, and the prevention of such cases is part of the professional skill of the teacher. The cultural identity of the participants in the educational process should not be taken into account in order to ensure intercultural equality. The language of instruction does not have a significant impact on the cultural identity of participants in the educational process.

Summarizing the results of the expert interview, it should be noted that all experts agree that education is a platform for intercultural interaction and dialogue. However, the relationship between the educational process and cultural diversity is quite complex, since knowledge is objective and should not depend on the cultural context. At the same time, the cultural context can be taken into account depending on the subject being taught. Regarding the unification of the form of clothing in an educational institution, experts disagreed, but they were united in allowing students to wear items of clothing or accessories that express their culture. The experts also expressed a common opinion that various events presenting the culture of participants in the edu-

cational process should be held, as this will strengthen cross-cultural ties and communication. Only one expert has faced discrimination on the basis of cultural identity. According to two experts, it is necessary to train teachers in anti-bullying techniques and methods aimed at preventing discrimination. The language of education, according to experts, does not always have an impact on the cultural identity of participants in the educational process.

Thus, we see that culture and education are interconnected. The educational environment is not only an educational process, but also an intercultural interaction, a dialogue of representatives of different cultures. Cultural diversity has an impact on the quality of education and on the learning environment. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account this factor through the prism of interculturalism.

## Conclusion

Education as a social phenomenon is directly related to its cultural context. At the same time, it is important to philosophically comprehend the phenomenon of education through a cross-cultural and philosophical approach. In the history of philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of comparative research of various Eastern and Western cultures is actualized, comparative philosophy is institutionalized as an independent field of philosophical research. In the context of comparative philosophy, Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, doctrines and concepts are compared. However, there is a tendency towards cultural synthesis, which is now known as the concept of “fusion philosophy”. Based on the criticism of this approach in comparative philosophy, such a direction as intercultural philosophy is formed, which considers all cultures as equal among themselves, without dividing them into eastern or Western.

The intercultural philosophy based on such principles as cognitive modesty, tolerant pluralism and “unity without uniformity” postulates and considers the phenomenon of the dialogue of cultures as a platform for genuine interaction of different cultures. Interculturalism creates an ideological basis for the interaction of representatives of different cultures in an educational environment. Cultural plurality has a significant im-

act on the quality of the educational process, as well as creates opportunities for intercultural dialogue. This is also facilitated by the holding of various cultural events that enrich the educational process, contribute to the formation of a tolerant and pluralistic attitude towards another culture. It is important to note that education, along with the fact that it performs the function of educating individuals, also forms a certain spiritual culture and values in them, performs the function of educating the individual. From this point of view, the intercultural context of education is of key importance, since it teaches to understand and accept other cultures, to recognize the equality of all cultures among themselves, and also to look for ways of optimal cooperation. Philosophical reflection of educational processes, an intercultural approach to this problem is becoming even more relevant in the context of modern global changes.

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