Training Technologies as a Factor in Developing of Young People's Religious Tolerance

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Abstract: article examines the problem of developing religious tolerance of young people in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. It substantiates the transition from traditional academic forms of education to innovative training technologies that influence the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of personality. A comparative analysis of modern scientific approaches by scientists from Uzbekistan, the CIS, and foreign countries is presented. Particular attention is paid to cognitive biases and methods for neutralizing them. A set of practical exercises is presented, and recommendations for integrating training modules into the curriculum of secular universities are formulated.

Keywords: socio-psychological training, religious tolerance, youth, training technologies, innovative pedagogy, cognitive biases, ethno-pedagogical approach, ideological immunity, intergroup contact, ethno-relativism, empathy, confirmation bias, stereotype deconstruction, cross-cultural competence, interactive teaching methods, interfaith dialogue.

In the context of globalization and multiculturalism in modern society, the issue of religious tolerance is of paramount importance. For young people - the social group most susceptible to radicalization and the influence of destructive ideologies - traditional lecture-based learning methods are becoming ineffective.

Religious tolerance among today's youth is a multidimensional psychological development, encompassing a cognitive component (knowledge and media literacy), an affective component (empathy and non-judgmental attitude), and a behavioral component (intercultural dialogue skills). Successfully developing tolerance is only possible through simultaneous intervention on all three levels, which is most effectively achieved through training technologies.

Innovative pedagogical technologies and trainings in particular, enable a transition from the passive acquisition of religious knowledge to the active development of value orientations. The role of training is to create a safe psychological space where participants can experience interaction, deconstruct stereotypes, and develop empathy skills. Unlike academic religious studies, training technologies influence not only the cognitive but also the emotional and behavioral levels of the individual, transforming tolerance from an external norm into an internal attitude. Training is a form of active learning aimed at developing knowledge, skills, abilities, and social attitudes. In educational psychology training is understood as a combination of psychotherapeutic, educational, and game-based methods integrated into a single process to achieve personal change.

Specially organized social and psychological training acts as a controlled "microenvironment" that allows participants to verbalize and critically reflect on latent ethno-confessional prejudices. The process of deconstructing stereotypes during training is a necessary step in the transition from passive tolerance to an active stance on intercultural interaction.

The theoretical and methodological basis of psychological and pedagogical studies of the use of training technologies in the formation of religious tolerance of young people are a systems approach through the consideration of tolerance as a complex structure (B. Lomov, V. Ganzen) [1, 2], a personality-oriented approach with an emphasis on self-development and subjectivity of the individual (Sh. Amonashvili, I. Yakimanskaya, E. Gaziyev) [3-5], the theory of intergroup contact based on the justification of reducing prejudice through interaction (G. Allport, T. Pettigrew) [6, 7], the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) as the ability to function successfully in situations of cultural diversity (K. Early, S. Anga) [8, 9].

The scientific problem of using trainings to develop religious tolerance is studied by a wide range of scientists.

In Uzbekistan research on this topic is based on the concept of "Enlightenment versus Ignorance", and the key trends for 2024-2025 are:

• *ethno-pedagogical approach:* integrating modern training techniques with traditional Eastern values (mahalla, respect for elders), while scientists explore how to use the legacy of ancestors (al-Bukhari, at-Tirmizi, and other thinkers) as the semantic foundation of training;

• *ideological immunity:* training is viewed as a preventative mechanism against radicalism, with a primary focus on developing critical thinking in young people to recognize manipulation in the information environment;

• *regional component:* research into the specifics of regions where interethnic and interfaith dialogue requires consideration of local sociocultural characteristics.

Among the scientists in the Republic of Uzbekistan conducting research on the use of training to develop religious and ethnic tolerance, it is necessary to highlight Sh. Barotov (2021), who views psychological services in education as a platform for preventing extremism through training technologies. E. Gaziyev (2020) in his works on youth psychology, emphasizes that training in the context of Uzbekistan should be based on the national mentality and traditions of tolerance of the East. R. Samarov (2019) points to the importance of ideological immunity developed during interactive sessions. G. Khudoykulova (2021) emphasizes the significance of ethnic characteristics in group training. G. Shukurova (2022) highlights empathy as the basis for interfaith dialogue.

A number of scientists in the Republic of Uzbekistan are conducting research on the fundamental aspects of training, which can be used in developing scenarios for training programs to develop tolerance. In particular, D. Mirzabdullaeva (2016) provides a typology of training participants and various methods of working with them. R. Musinova (2021) presents the content of training programs for students of higher education institutions. M. Khaitov (2018) substantiates the pedagogical conditions for developing tolerance in students of secular universities. N. Urinova (2020) considers socio-psychological trainings as an innovative technology for increasing the social activity of young people.

Analyzing trends in research on training technologies as a tool for developing intercultural, ethnic, and religious tolerance among scientists of the CIS countries, it is important to note that in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus the predominant socio-psychological discourse is aimed at integrating migrants and stabilizing multinational societies, and the main trends in this direction in 2024-2025 are:

• *digitalization of training:* active exploration of VR[1] capabilities for simulating intercultural encounters with research in the field of "Psychology of digital citizenship" and combating xenophobic cyberbullying;

• cross-cultural competence: transition from the concept of tolerance (passive acceptance) to Intercultural Intelligence (CQ), with training focused on teaching negotiation and mediation skills in conflict zones;

• inclusiveness: religious tolerance is explored in conjunction with social inclusion, and programs are being developed for multi-faith school classes and student groups.

The founder of the psychology of tolerance among CIS scientists A. Asmolov (2011) argues that training is a tool for "tuning" a culture of dignity against a culture of fear. S. Bondyreva (2015) links tolerance with the spiritual development of the individual through collective activity. I. Vachkov (2018), a specialist in fairy tale therapy and training technologies, suggests using metaphors to discuss religious dogmas. N. Lebedeva (2021) explores cross-cultural psychology and considers training as a method for overcoming "culture shock". G. Soldatova (2000), a developer of classic tolerance training programs, emphasizes the importance of reducing ethnocentrism. O. Khukhlaev (2020) focuses on intercultural competence training among young people.

Research trends in foreign countries (Europe, USA, Canada) indicate that Western science is focusing on neuropsychology and contact theory with the key trends for 2024-2025 being:

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[1] virtual reality

• *neuropsychology of tolerance:* a study of how training influences amygdala activity when perceiving "foreign" objects, based on the scientific position that regular mindfulness practices reduce automatic prejudice;

• *the "Living Library" method:* a popular trend, where instead of a textbook, the "book" is a living person - a representative of a different religion or ethnic group - and the effectiveness of this method in reducing dehumanization is scientifically substantiated;

• *ethno-relativism:* research based on M. Bennett's model [10], aimed at training individuals to stop seeing their own culture as the "center of the world" and learn to perceive other value systems as equal. American intercultural communications specialist and author of the intercultural sensitivity model M. Bennett (2013) has made a significant contribution to international research on training technologies for developing tolerance. He emphasizes that training should shift individuals from "ethno-centrism" to "ethno-relativism".

Acculturation theory author J. Berry (2019) notes that training helps people choose a strategy of integration over assimilation. Emotion expert D. Matsumoto (2022) points to the need for training in controlling micro-expressions of anger during interreligious disputes. American psychologist G. Allport (1954), developer of the personality trait theory and the scale for describing the behavioral component of prejudice, formulated the contact hypothesis, according to which training is effective if participants are of equal status. A leading social psychologist and one of the world's most respected researchers of intergroup relations and prejudice T. Pettigrew (2011) explores the long-term effects of prejudice-reducing training. C. Rogers (1985), the founder of client-centered therapy, developed the concept of "unconditional positive regard", which is the psychological foundation of tolerant behavior and the basis of all tolerance training.

Summarizing the main trends in scientific views on the application of training technologies for the development of intercultural, ethnic, and religious tolerance in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the CIS and foreign countries, it can be noted that research in Uzbekistan demonstrates the priority of spiritual and moral education. In Uzbekistan training is viewed not simply as skill development, but as a tool for shaping civic stance. The "Interactive Lecture-Training" technology demonstrates a synthesis of classical academic approaches and modern active methods, and the use of case-studies on spiritual heritage makes this technology unique, as it appeals to the "cultural code" of young people, reducing psychological resistance when discussing religion.

The CIS countries (Russia, Kazakhstan) are characterized by a focus on a socio-pragmatic approach, stabilizing society, and managing migration risks. The use of VR technologies demonstrates the desire of scientists to speak to young people in the

language of the "digital generation". Here, trainings are aimed at behavioral adaptation, with a primary focus on reducing social distancing in multicultural megacities. The CIS School of Psychology successfully adapts Western methods, complementing them with a deep analysis of the ethno-psychological characteristics of the post-Soviet space.

The model of foreign countries (USA, Canada, Israel, Austria, India, Great Britain) is based on neuropsychological and dehumanization correction. Western research has shifted to micro-psychology and physiology, as the "Living Library" methods and neurocognitive exercises are aimed at working with subconscious brain reactions. Global science recognizes that tolerance is not only a belief but also a self-regulation skill, the primary goal of which is to break stereotypes through personal experience, thereby minimizing biologically conditioned fear of "others".

Despite the differences in scientific approaches in Uzbekistan, the CIS, and foreign countries regarding the use of training technologies in tolerance development, a general trend toward a shift from "passive listening" to "active living" is observed. All researchers recognize training as the most effective innovative technology for developing intercultural, ethnic, and religious tolerance. In this technology, a teacher of Religious Studies at a secular university ceases to be a mere transmitter of knowledge and becomes a facilitator who manages complex group dynamics.

A thorough analysis of tolerance development requires an understanding that training is not simply the transfer of knowledge, but rather addressing the cognitive distortions of an individual's perception. In the context of religious tolerance, cognitive distortions are "filters" that the brain uses to simplify reality. In matters of religion, they act as powerful barriers with different semantic orientations:

• *the effects of "In-group favoritism" and "Out-group homogeneity"* consist of an individual subconsciously perceiving their own group (believers of their own faith) as unique and diverse individuals, while members of other religions are seen as a uniform, gray mass.

• *the paradox of "Confirmation Bias"* is based on the fact that an individual only notices information that confirms their negative stereotype about another religion, and ignores facts that refute it. If a news story about radical flashes in the media, the brain "confirms": "I knew it!"

• *the phenomenon of "Illusory Correlation"* is based on a false connection between two events, for example, the association of certain clothing (hijab, cassock, yarmulke, sari, etc.) with aggression or backwardness. The brain registers a rare, striking event and makes it the rule.

• *the "Bias Blind Spot" effect*, expressed by the specificity of subjective perception, when an individual easily notices fanaticism and intolerance in others

("They're radical"), but is completely unaware of their own prejudices ("I'm just objective").

Based on personal experience in conducting trainings on developing religious tolerance, the following techniques for neutralizing cognitive distortions are recommended:

1. The "Exposure" principle: gradually confronting frightening or incomprehensible content in "small doses".

2. The "Reframing" technique: shifting the discussion from dogmatic (what we believe) to psychology (what we feel when we believe).

3. Using an "Arbiter": engaging a strong facilitator in working with the group who does not take a specific side but firmly suppresses dehumanization.

4. The "Living Library" training exercise, where a representative of the "out" group tells a personal, unique story, dispelling the myth of homogeneity.

5. A technique for deconstructing religious news fakes with a critical analysis of sources, helping to eliminate confirmation bias.

6. Video analysis of training fragments or role-playing games, where participants can see themselves from the outside.

7. Developing critical and lateral thinking.

In developing religious tolerance, "Conflict Resistance Training" (working with religious provocations) and "Ethnoreligious Sensitive Training" (developing sensitivity to the cultural codes of various faiths) have proven highly effective. Among the highly effective exercises:

• "Conceptual Dictionary" (goal: cognitive correction) - participants define the terms "secularism", "fundamentalism", "faith", "freedom of conscience", "radicalism", "xenophobia", and others, and then compare their definitions with scientific ones;

• "Manifesto of Humanity" (goal: expanding knowledge of the common ethical values of world religions) - participants are formed into small groups and given a set of cards with quotes from sacred texts (the Quran, the Bible, the Torah, the Tripitaka, etc.) concerning peace, mercy, and honesty, but without specifying the source. The groups' task is to find a common thread in all the quotes and create a unified "Manifesto of Humanity". At the end of the exercise, the psychologist reveals the authorship of the quotes, demonstrating the unity of humanistic principles.

• "Meeting at the Border" (goal: empathy training) - participants in pairs play the roles of representatives of different faiths who find themselves in the same situation (for example, in a train compartment). One must perform a ritual (prayer), the other is an atheist who is bothered by this. The task: find a compromise without offending each other's feelings;

• "Island of Values" (goal: practicing consensus-building skills in a multicultural environment and identifying the mechanisms of "in-group favoritism") - participants are given a story: they are on a desert island and belong to different religious communities. They must adopt an "Island Constitution" consisting of five laws in 20 minutes. The key is that each law must be adopted unanimously, without infringing on the rights of any group;

• "Meme Deconstructor" (goal: developing critical thinking and media literacy regarding religious content) - participants are shown popular Internet memes or news headlines containing hidden prejudices or falsehoods about religious groups. Using fact-checking tools, they must dissect the meme and determine the manipulation, what emotion it plays on, and who benefits from the dissemination of this stereotype;

• "Tree of the Future" (goal: reinforcing positive group dynamics and designing a tolerant environment) - a large poster depicts a tree symbolizing Uzbekistan (society). Participants are given leaf-shaped stickers, on which each must write one specific action they will take in the coming month to strengthen interfaith harmony in their university or mahalla. The "leaves" are glued to the tree, creating a shared visual picture of collective responsibility.

An analysis of the information presented in this article allows us to conclude that religious tolerance at the current stage of societal development cannot be fostered solely through academic methods. Training technologies are the most relevant tool for young people, as they meet the demand for interactivity and the practical applicability of knowledge. Integrating psychological training into the educational process at secular universities not only helps to prevent conflicts but also to develop intercultural leadership competencies in students. Based on these arguments, we recommend:

1. Introduce a mandatory "Tolerance Lab" module (any name is possible) into the Religious Studies course, covering 15-20% of the curriculum time.

2. Create an inter-university network of trainer-facilitators consisting of psychologists and faculty from humanities departments.

3. Develop a national digital simulator (VR training) to immerse students in the context of various cultural and religious monuments of Uzbekistan.

4. Conduct an "Interfaith Dialogue Week" at all universities, using forum theaters as a form of mass social and psychological training.

5. Include the "Level of Tolerance Development" criterion in the university's educational quality monitoring system.

Implementation of the above recommendations will ensure statistically significant growth in indicators of overall communicative and religious tolerance, and positive dynamics will be characterized by a decrease in the level of social distance in

relation to representatives of "other" faiths and an increased willingness to cooperate in a multicultural environment.

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