

## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN RUSSIA AND CHINA: PERSPECTIVES OF DEVELOPMENT

### *EDUCAÇÃO MULTICULTURAL NA RÚSSIA E NA CHINA: PERSPECTIVAS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO*

### *EDUCACIÓN MULTICULTURAL EN RUSIA Y CHINA: PERSPECTIVAS DE DESARROLLO*



Tatiana ZHUKOVA<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: t.a.zhukova@mymail.academy



Anastasia AVDEEVA<sup>2</sup>

e-mail: anastasia.avdeeva@mymail.academy



Nina KOZLOVTSEVA<sup>3</sup>

e-mail: nina.kozlovtseva@mymail.academy



Svetlana KHALEVINA<sup>4</sup>

e-mail: svetlana.khalevina@mymail.academy



Daria SUKHORUKOVA<sup>5</sup>

e-mail: d.v.sukhorukova@mymail.academy



Kseniia MARAKULINA<sup>6</sup>

e-mail: kseniia.marakulina@mymail.academy

<sup>1</sup> Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation (FinU), Moscow – Russia. Doctor of Pedagogy, Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication; National Research Technological University “MISIS” (NUST MISIS), Moscow – Russia, Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages in Communication Technologies.

<sup>2</sup> Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation (FinU), Moscow – Russia. Graduate Student, Assistant of the Department of International Business.

<sup>3</sup> Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation (FinU), Moscow – Russia. Ph.D. in Cultural Studies, Associate professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication.

<sup>4</sup> Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation (FinU), Moscow – Russia. Ph.D. in Philology, Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication.

<sup>5</sup> Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation (FinU), Moscow – Russia. Senior Lecturer, Department of Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication.

<sup>6</sup> Moscow Technical University of Communications and Informatics (MTUCI), Moscow – Russia. Ph.D. in Political Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Social Relations, Advertising, and Public Relations.

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**ABSTRACT:** This article analyses the transformation of Russian education after the collapse of the Soviet Union and examines how these changes shaped the development of multicultural educational interaction between Russia and China. The study covers the period from 1991 to 2023 and uses the modality theory of C. Allemann-Ghionda, together with comparative-historical and historical-systemic methods. It identifies structural similarities and differences in the two educational systems, traces the historical role of Russian-Chinese educational contacts, and systematizes the main stages in the formation of multicultural education in both countries. The article argues that multicultural education should be understood not only as a general principle of tolerance, but also as a practical mechanism for academic cooperation, intercultural competence development, and the training of specialists capable of working in international environments.

**KEYWORDS:** Multicultural education. Development perspectives. Higher education in China and Russia. Intercultural dialogue. Educational cooperation.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo analisa a transformação da educação russa após o colapso da União Soviética e examina como essas mudanças moldaram o desenvolvimento da interação educacional multicultural entre a Rússia e a China. O estudo abrange o período de 1991 a 2023 e utiliza a teoria das modalidades de C. Allemann-Ghionda, juntamente com os métodos comparativo-histórico e histórico-sistêmico. Identifica semelhanças e diferenças estruturais entre os dois sistemas educacionais, traça o papel histórico dos contatos educacionais russo-chineses e sistematiza as principais etapas da formação da educação multicultural em ambos os países. O artigo sustenta que a educação multicultural deve ser compreendida não apenas como um princípio geral de tolerância, mas também como um mecanismo prático de cooperação acadêmica, desenvolvimento de competências interculturais e formação de especialistas capazes de atuar em ambientes internacionais.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação multicultural. Perspectivas de desenvolvimento. Ensino superior na China e na Rússia. Diálogo intercultural. Cooperação educacional.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo analiza la transformación de la educación rusa tras el colapso de la Unión Soviética y examina cómo estos cambios configuraron el desarrollo de la interacción educativa multicultural entre Rusia y China. El estudio abarca el período de 1991 a 2023 y utiliza la teoría de las modalidades de C. Allemann-Ghionda, junto con los métodos comparativo-histórico e histórico-sistêmico. Identifica similitudes y diferencias estructurales entre los dos sistemas educativos, rastrea el papel histórico de los contactos educativos ruso-chinos y sistematiza las principales etapas de la formación de la educación multicultural en ambos países. El artículo sostiene que la educación multicultural debe entenderse no solo como un principio general de tolerancia, sino también como un mecanismo práctico de cooperación académica, desarrollo de competencias interculturales y formación de especialistas capaces de trabajar en entornos internacionales.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación multicultural. Perspectivas de desarrollo. Educación superior en China y Rusia. Diálogo intercultural. Cooperación educativa.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the key state and social mechanisms through which countries form human capital, cultural identity, and long-term development strategies. In conditions of globalization and deglobalization, the transformation of educational systems is inseparable from intercultural communication and international cooperation. For this reason, the study of multicultural education in Russia and China is relevant for understanding how national educational systems respond to social, political, and cultural change.

Although Russian-Chinese educational cooperation has been discussed in previous studies, existing works often examine institutional reform, historical contacts, or internationalization separately. Less attention has been paid to how post-Soviet reforms in Russia influenced the formation of a multicultural educational space in cooperation with China. This article addresses this gap. Its central research problem is how the transformation of Russian education after the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to new forms of multicultural educational interaction between Russia and China.

The study focuses on the period from 1991 to 2023, while earlier historical episodes are used to contextualize the long-term foundations of Russian-Chinese educational cooperation. The aim of the article is to determine the prospects for the development of educational systems in the multicultural space of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. The research objectives are to perform a structural and functional analysis of the Chinese and Russian, including Soviet, educational systems; to present a historical overview of their development; and to identify the main stages and reforms that shaped multicultural education in both countries.

In this article, “multicultural education” refers to an educational approach aimed at developing intercultural competence, tolerance, and the ability to interact constructively across cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries. “Multicultural space” means the institutional and social environment in which different educational traditions and cultural groups coexist. “Educational interaction” denotes concrete forms of cooperation between educational systems and institutions, including academic mobility, joint programs, curriculum development, and intercultural communication.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in connecting the historical transformation of Russian and Chinese educational systems with a model of multicultural education for Russian-Chinese cooperation. The theoretical significance is to systematize the main modalities of this

interaction. The practical significance is to identify tools for training specialists capable of working in multilingual and intercultural professional environments.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The study is based on the modality theory of C. Allemann-Ghionda (2007), which is used as an analytical framework for comparing educational systems and identifying historical, institutional, and intercultural links. The analysis combines structural-functional, comparative-historical, historical-systemic, and theoretical literature analysis. These methods make it possible to examine both the internal organization of the Russian and Chinese educational systems and the external factors that shaped their mutual influence.

Four analytical blocks are used in the article: the first modality examines the contemporary structure and management of education; the second reconstructs the historical prerequisites of Russian-Chinese educational cooperation; the third focuses on radical educational reforms after the collapse of the USSR and China's reform trajectory; and the fourth formulates development prospects and a predictive model. This structure also organizes the literature review and prevents a purely chronological description.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is organized not as a sequence of isolated sources, but as a set of thematic blocks connected with the modalities used in the study. This structure allows the discussion to move from institutional comparison to historical interaction, reform dynamics, and development prospects.

### *First modality*

Within the first modality, the review begins with a synchronic comparison of the current educational systems of Russia and China. This block focuses on structure, levels of education, governance mechanisms, and adaptation to global requirements.

At the structural level, Russian and Chinese systems display both continuity and transformation. Soviet education was largely state-funded and organized around specialization and the training of scientific and pedagogical personnel. After reforms from 1990 to 2023, Russia developed a more complex sectorial and level-based structure, including diversified types of universities, new aims of training, and revised teaching approaches (Erokhin et al.,

2018). According to Russian legislation, vocational and higher education are now differentiated into the following levels: (1) specialization and (2) training of scientific and pedagogical personnel (postgraduate and doctoral studies). In the modern reality, Russian general education institutions are distinguished by a complex sectorial and level division (Erokhin et al., 2018)—during the years of constant reforms between 1990–2023, Russia has significantly transformed the levels of higher education, types of universities, as well as their goals, objectives, approaches in training, teaching methods, etc. (Erokhin et al., 2018). As a result, according to the latest legislation of the Russian Federation, four levels of vocational education are differentiated:

- Secondary vocational education (from two to four years);

And higher education:

- Bachelor's degree (four years);
- Specialization (five years) and master's degree (two years of study after completing a bachelor's degree);
- Training of personnel of higher qualification (postgraduate studies – three years, doctoral studies – three to six years) (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2012, Art. 10).

These terms are provided for full-time study, while part-time (evening) and correspondence courses require one year longer than full-time courses.

Since 2012, the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” has distinguished two types of institutions that may independently conduct educational activities: educational organizations of higher education and scientific organizations (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2012). In both Russia and China, higher education is provided mainly by universities and scientific organizations, whereas in some other countries the bachelor's degree may be organized as a separate sector (Erokhin et al., 2018).

China has a broadly comparable structure of higher and professional education: specialization usually lasts two to three years, the bachelor's degree four to five years, the master's degree two to three years, and doctoral studies three to four years (Guruleva, 2017). In Russia, the 2023 presidential decree introduced a pilot project for 2023/24-2025/26 that changes the levels of professional education by distinguishing basic higher education,



specialized higher education, master's programs, and postgraduate studies (President of the Russian Federation, 2023).

Governance is another point of comparison. The Soviet system of higher education was traditionally vertically managed, and sectorial differentiation of higher education institutions remained fundamental for a long period (Platonova, 2015). Contemporary Russia is dominated by socio-economic universities, followed by a smaller cluster of engineering and technical universities (Platonova, 2015). Chinese higher education uses a comparable state-centered model, but its institutional governance includes a party committee, which is described as a mechanism for ensuring the implementation of central policy decisions (Donetskaya & Bin, 2022).

Thus, the first modality shows that Russia and China share a strong state role in higher education and a reliance on universities and scientific organizations. At the same time, they differ in the stability of degree duration, institutional governance, and the direction of recent reforms. These structural findings provide the basis for the second modality, which turns from the present organization of education to the historical roots of Russian-Chinese educational interaction.

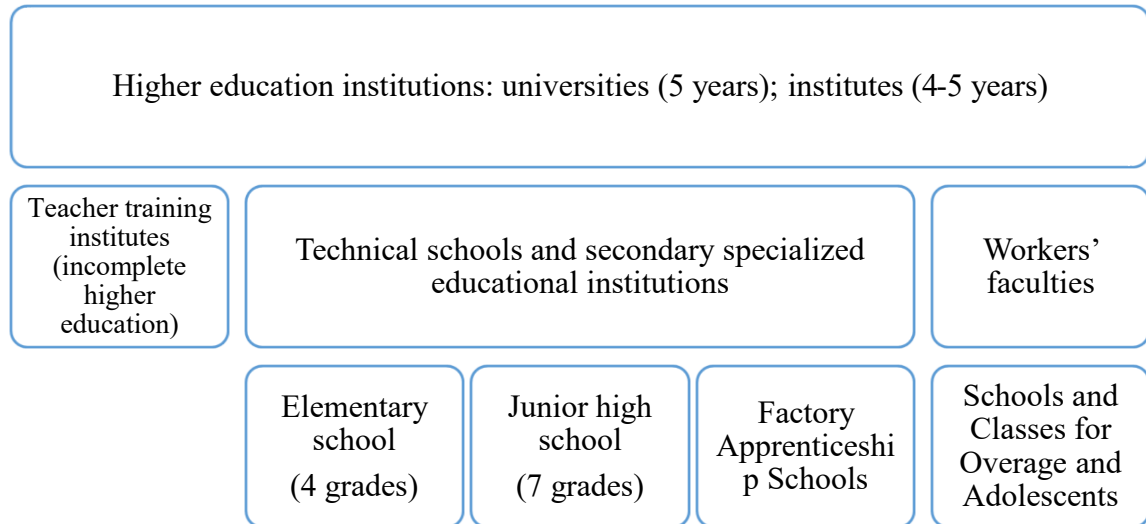
### *Second modality*

The second modality explains how historical contacts shaped the educational systems and cultural ties of Russia and China. Stable Russian-Chinese cultural contacts began in the mid-seventeenth century through the Beijing Spiritual Mission. Later, the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway in the early twentieth century strengthened cooperation and led to the opening of Russian educational institutions in Tianjin and Shanghai. Their curricula followed the model of the Russian Empire, and by 1904 more than thirty such institutions were operating in China (Antipovsky et al., 1980).

After the October Revolution of 1917, Soviet-Chinese educational relations intensified. Mao Zedong described the Russian Revolution as an event that opened new horizons for China (Xing, 2021). In 1921 and 1925, two Universities of Chinese Workers were opened in Moscow, where students from both republics studied, including future members of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC). From the late 1920s, cooperation was shaped by Soviet geopolitical interests and by the Chinese authorities' desire to adopt "the experience of building socialism in the USSR" (Xing, 2021, p. 53). This context explains why the educational systems of the two countries developed several similar features (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**

*The public education system in the USSR based on the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Military-Industrial Complex of May 16, 1934 with subsequent amendments*



*Note.* Prepared by the authors.

The Cold War, scientific and technological development, and the emergence of electronic computing in the USSR increased the demand for specialists with higher education (Logvinovich, 2018). Personnel training was closely connected with the planned economy and the needs of industrial regions of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Russian SFSR). In China, communist ideology also shaped state and social institutions, creating an additional basis for educational and political convergence with the Soviet model (Gusevskaya & Mamkina, 2017).

The historical overview shows that humanitarian and educational ties were not secondary to Russian-Chinese relations; they were one of their stable foundations. This explains why contemporary discussions of educational reform in both countries often return to the Soviet experience of higher education, especially the period of its development in the 1970s and 1980s (Logvinovich, 2018). The next modality therefore examines how the post-Soviet transformation and China's reform trajectory changed this inherited educational framework.

### *Third modality*

Within the third modality, the analysis moves from historical continuity to radical educational change. In Russia, the collapse of the USSR marked a turning point: from the early 1990s, educational reforms were aimed at democratization, modernization, and institutional



autonomy. These reforms expanded access and diversified educational institutions, but they also created problems of quality assurance and governance in a rapidly changing higher education system (Chankseliani, 2022).

In education management, Russia moved from the centralized Soviet system to more autonomous and self-governing institutions. This transition required adaptation to new socio-economic conditions, new curricula, revised standards, and mechanisms of institutional accountability (Zajda, 2003).

These reforms reflected broader global trends: democratized governance, wider access to education, labor-market orientation, and international competition (Khukhlaeva et al., 2023).

During the last decade of the USSR, multicultural education gained new importance amid political change and the strengthening of republican national identities. International integration broadened the worldview of students and teachers and encouraged a more global understanding of multiculturalism. Curricula began to include the history, culture, languages, and traditions of the peoples of the USSR, while student and teacher exchange programs supported mutual understanding and cooperation (Bessarabova, 2012).

In the 1990s, the term “multicultural education” appeared in Russian science, replacing the Soviet ideas of proletarian internationalism and socialist patriotism, which had too bright ideological colouring (Nikiforova, 2016).

From 2000 to 2010, multicultural education in Russia emphasized the consolidation of different cultures and the development of programs that recognized students’ cultural differences. It became especially relevant after the collapse of the USSR, when schools and universities had to respond to migration, regional diversity, and the need to form students’ political and cultural competence (Deng, 1987).

During the same period, practical approaches included ethnographic materials, case technologies, and interdisciplinary tasks designed to develop intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity (Pepper, 1996).

Another important reform was the introduction of the Unified State Examination (USE) as a standardized university admission procedure. Before the USE, universities organized their own entrance examinations, which produced different assessment criteria and unequal conditions for applicants from different regions (Wang, 2018).

In multicultural terms, the USE can be interpreted as an attempt to create a more unified and inclusive access mechanism. However, standardization alone cannot remove socio-cultural

and regional inequalities; students from diverse backgrounds also need preparatory support, language assistance, and transparent admission information (Deng, 1994).

Despite controversies and criticism, this reform was intended to provide a more objective assessment of graduates' knowledge and skills across the country.

The Russian experience in the field of education reform is thus a complex process that combines both positive achievements and unresolved challenges related to ensuring the quality of education and adapting to new realities.

In China, major educational changes began with the reform and opening-up policy of the late 1970s. Education and science were linked to the “four modernizations” and became key instruments of national economic modernization. Since then, China has increasingly joined the global educational community through international cooperation and quality-improvement policies (Simbirtseva & Shulga, 2017).

This reorientation shows how China adapted to global educational trends while preserving national priorities.

From the mid-1990s, Chinese educational policy shifted more visibly from the Soviet model toward Western, especially American, approaches. This shift was particularly evident in doctoral education, where coursework, quality assurance, and new management mechanisms became more important (Efremova, 2017).

In China's post-reform educational trajectory, the collapse of the USSR reinforced the need to combine general Marxist principles with China's specific national conditions, as emphasized by Deng Xiaoping. This approach also influenced the strengthening of multicultural education. It reflected the intention to create an inclusive educational environment that prepares students for a globalized world. Multicultural education in China aims to develop respect for cultural diversity and to train specialists capable of intercultural interaction and international cooperation (Deng, 1994).

Taken together, the Russian and Chinese cases show that educational reforms were driven by globalization, market orientation, and the search for greater international attractiveness. This conclusion connects the third modality with the results section, where the article systematizes development prospects for multicultural education.

## RESULTS

### *Fifth modality*

The fourth modality moves from historical and institutional analysis to the prospects for multicultural education in Russian-Chinese cooperation. It identifies long-term trends that have influenced the current state of both systems and supports the construction of a predictive model for future development.

Since the early 2000s, education has increasingly functioned as an instrument of soft power in both Russia and China. In this context, multicultural education became important not only for domestic integration but also for international cooperation. In Russia, the period from 2000 to 2010 was marked by programs aimed at consolidating cultural diversity, recognizing students' cultural backgrounds, and adapting educational institutions to migration-related challenges (Deng, 1987).

From 2010 to 2020, multicultural education in Russia developed as a response to globalization and cultural tensions. Universities became especially important in this process because they provided spaces for interaction among representatives of different national, ethnic, and religious groups. Educational practices included multiethnic, sociocultural, and personal-cultural approaches aimed at improving communication in diverse learning environments.

Multilingualism and cultural diversity were therefore central to multicultural education. Multilingual models introduced students to world culture through several languages and helped them assimilate the cultural, historical, and social experience of different peoples.

Scientific works on multicultural education in China indicate that a modern understanding of this field began to take shape in 1996, when the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on strengthening socialist spiritual civilization was adopted at the Sixth Plenum of the 14th CPC Central Committee. The document defined ideological guidelines and goals for building socialist spiritual civilization in the subsequent period.

Between 1996 and 2010, publications focused on teaching students from different ethnic groups and with different views in the same classroom. Scholars emphasized that teachers needed to understand these differences and select tasks and interaction schemes that supported communication among students and between students and teachers.

After 2011, multicultural education in China entered a new stage. International events, migration-related tensions in the United States and Europe, and China's own expansion of

student exchange programs encouraged researchers to adapt multicultural education theory to Chinese conditions. As international mobility increased, Chinese universities faced a stronger need to prepare both teachers and students for study and communication in multicultural environments.

This shift increased the practical importance of teacher training, language support, and adaptation mechanisms for international students.

Overall, the results show that Russian-Chinese educational interaction has shaped both countries' educational paradigms. Historical cooperation facilitated the exchange of knowledge, institutional models, and cultural values, while recent reforms created new conditions for multicultural education and international academic cooperation.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. The analysis of the educational systems of Russia and China leads to three conclusions that are important for the development of multicultural education in both countries:

- Russia is currently changing the duration and structure of basic and specialized higher education, whereas China maintains a more stable structure at the specialist, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels;
- Humanitarian and educational ties remain a stable element of Russian-Chinese relations, and Russia's historical contribution to education in China continues to influence scholarly interpretations of this cooperation;
- Both countries seek to increase the international attractiveness and quality of their education systems, which creates conditions for designing new mechanisms of multicultural education.

These conclusions identify the main trends that should guide the development of multicultural education in Russian-Chinese cooperation.

2. Forecasting model. On the basis of these trends, the article proposes a predictive framework for training international economists for intercultural interaction. The model combines an integrative, individual, and practice-oriented approach. It may be used as a program of action that defines general conditions, directions of activity, additional modules, and initiative projects adapted to regional and individual needs of students.

The proposed modules can be embedded in courses such as “International Economic Relations” and “Fundamentals of Intercultural Communication in Professional Activities”. The first module develops professional competence through tasks related to global economic analysis, foreign trade strategies, and international project management. Its aim is to connect theoretical knowledge about international economic relations with the practical professional activity of an international economist.

Within this module, students should examine the main functions of an international economist, professional characteristics required in this field, and principles of the competency-based approach in international economic activity. They should also work with professional challenges such as analyzing global economic trends, developing foreign trade strategies, and managing international projects.

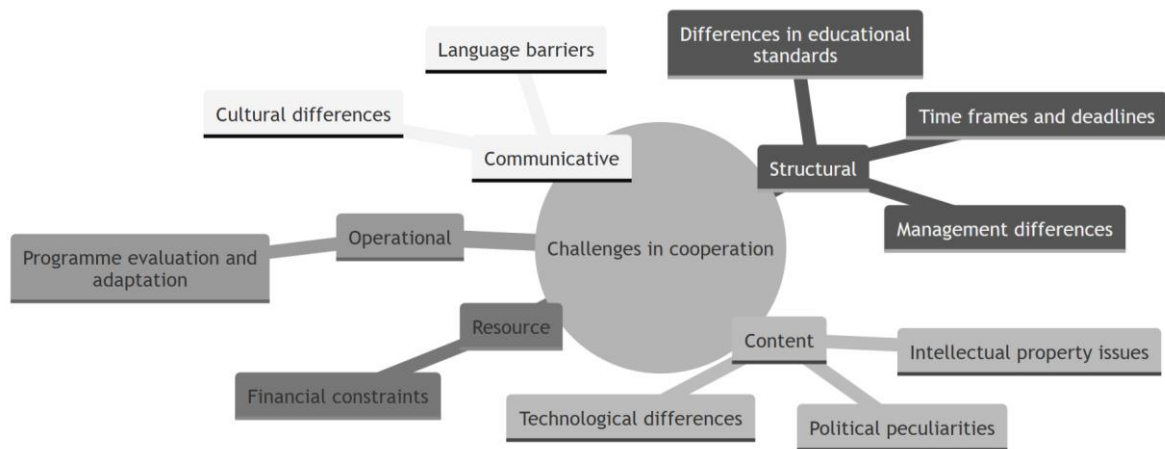
The second stage develops linguistic and intercultural competence. At this stage, language-related disciplines become central because they help students conduct international negotiations while considering cultural diversity. The initiative project “Development of an Intercultural Strategy for International Negotiations” may be introduced into the course “International Trade Negotiations” using immersion methods.

The third stage strengthens methodological and strategic competence. It includes two initiative projects: “Global Strategies: Intercultural Interaction and Economic Partnership 2025-2035” and “Development of Economic Training Programs for Multi-Ethnic Cooperation between Russia and China”. Additional tasks may include the design of hybrid network structures, student holdings, and game-based projects developed in line with the roadmap “ASI: Future of Global Education 2015-2035”.

3. The development model is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.**

*Predictive model for the development of multicultural education in Russian-Chinese cooperation*



*Note.* Prepared by the authors.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study confirms that Russian and Chinese educational systems have both shared foundations and distinctive development trajectories. The collapse of the USSR, subsequent reforms in Russia, and the transformation of Chinese higher education changed the conditions of international educational cooperation. In this context, multicultural education functions not only as a general principle of tolerance, but also as a mechanism for developing intercultural competence, academic mobility, and professional readiness for work in international environments.

The main scientific result of the article is the systematization of four analytical modalities that connect structural comparison, historical interaction, radical reform, and development prospects. This approach shows that Russian-Chinese educational cooperation is based on long-term humanitarian ties, but its contemporary development depends on the ability of universities to integrate multilingual, intercultural, and professionally oriented training.

The practical recommendations are as follows. First, Russian and Chinese universities should introduce joint modules on intercultural communication and comparative education into professional training programs. Second, academic mobility should be accompanied by language preparation and cultural adaptation support. Third, teacher training should include methods for working with multicultural classrooms. Fourth, joint programs should include mechanisms for monitoring students' intercultural competencies and adaptation difficulties.



The strategic implications of the study are connected with three directions: strengthening institutional cooperation between universities, developing bilingual and multilingual educational environments, and designing practice-oriented curricula for specialists working in international fields. These directions can help transform multicultural education from a declarative principle into a structured element of Russian-Chinese educational cooperation.

Further research should test the proposed model in specific academic programs and evaluate its impact on students' intercultural competence, professional communication skills, and readiness for international cooperation.

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