

## LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE MULTICULTURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Groups of people can have their own cultural characteristics, independent of state borders.

A community can be multicultural by religious, racial, ethnic, language or other characteristics (Miettinen, 2001). In the context of a multicultural community, awareness of the distinguishing features of the community and common understanding of terminology is very important for teachers (Koponen, 2004). The Estonian public education curriculum (National curriculum for basic schools ..., 2010; National curriculum for upper secondary schools ..., 2010) contains important elements from the perspective of multiculturalism. One of the goals of the curriculum was to support students with a different native language and cultural background. The curriculum emphasizes language skills as an important part of identity, and a respectful attitude towards the culture and language of other nations and the usage of the Estonian language as a secondary language. However, it also shapes the students as the carriers of their own culture. In addition, it requires the students to develop their active position as a citizen, and feel themselves as capable members of the community. Basic societal values included in the basic and upper secondary school curricula include respect for others' native language and culture, and also multiculturalism. At the same time, the process of socialization is founded on the traditions of Estonian culture, common European values, and the cultural and scientific achievements of the world (Explanatory note ..., 2010). It is emphasized that the learning process must account for the student's cultural background (ibid.).

Multiculturalism and worldwide globalization mean that immigrants from other countries have reached Estonia (that was mainly considered as a Russian speaking area), who have put their children into Estonian or Russian speaking schools. Accordingly, the goal of this report is to give an overview of the possible cultural and language barriers between the students as well as between students and teachers in a basic school with multicultural classes located in Ida-Virumaa county. It also focuses on coping strategies for similar problems in the corresponding classes, as well as the dominating language in school, at home and outside the home. The concluding part of the work analyzes the issues of culture and identity.

### REFERENCES

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