

DIMINISHING INTERGROUP DISCORDANCE THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION COURSES

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Abstract:

Multilingual and multicultural societies are very often conflict-driven, and can be characterized by ethnolinguistic and cultural differentiations, social inequality etc. Discordance factor (D-factor) indicates dissonance, a lack of confidence, perceived inequity and animosity between two ethnic groups living together on one territory. The D-factor consists of four components: 1) the extent of legitimacy of the interethnic situation, 2) the extent of mutual lack of confidence, 3) the extent of mutual cooperativeness and 4) the extent of outgroup dehumanization. To measure these indicators, a questionnaire comprising 17 claims was created. In this paper I will discuss the findings of a pilot study carried out among Estonian and Russian-speaking students of Tallinn University. The purpose of the pilot study was to test whether statements adequately measure the factors that play a role in intergroup discordance such as legitimacy, confidence, cooperativeness and dehumanization. I will discuss how the D-factor is related to cross-cultural communication and how it could be reduced via majority and minority educational processes. I will argue that: 1) an understanding of multilingualism and multiculturalism ought to be developed that addresses the collective and individual needs of majority and minority students; 2) special courses in psychology and ethnosociology should be arranged to help majority and minority students to understand linguistic and cultural diversity.

Keywords: *Majority; Minority; Discordance; Education; Estonians; Russian-speakers.*