

**STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL PEDAGOGICAL MODEL OF FORMING  
INTERETHNIC HARMONY AND SOLIDARITY COMPETENCE AMONG  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

In the modern era of intense globalization, digital transformation, and shifting socio-political paradigms, fostering interethnic harmony, social cohesion, and mutual solidarity among university students has transformed from an auxiliary educational goal into a critical pedagogical necessity. This paper develops and substantiates a comprehensive structural-functional pedagogical model specifically designed to build and evaluate interethnic harmony and solidarity competence within higher education environments. Utilizing a systemic framework, the proposed model synthesizes four interconnected structural blocks operated through vital pedagogical functions. The paper details the specific empirical indicators, modern interactive technologies, and structural interdependencies essential for the operationalization of this model. The ultimate goal is to move beyond superficial tolerance towards a robust, actionable competence that prepares future specialists to actively foster multicultural equilibrium in local and global professional arenas.

**Keywords:** Structural-functional model, interethnic harmony, solidarity competence, higher education, pedagogical technologies, multicultural education, systemic approach.

**Introduction**

The contemporary global landscape is characterized by deep contradictions. While digital connectivity, economic integration, and cross-border educational migration have drawn different cultures closer than ever before, localized geopolitical tensions, socio-economic disparities, and digital echo chambers have simultaneously accelerated polarization, micro-aggressions, and cultural insularity. Within this dualistic reality, higher education institutions (HEIs) stand as critical micro-societies. Universities are not merely spaces for the transmission of technical expertise or specialized disciplinary knowledge; they are transformative socio-pedagogical ecosystems where diverse values, worldviews, and ethno-cultural backgrounds converge.

Historically, pedagogical approaches to managing diversity in student environments have often relied on passive notions of *tolerance*—a concept that implies merely enduring or permitting the presence of the cultural "Other." However, passive tolerance is inherently fragile and highly susceptible to breaking down under the strain of socio-economic crises or targeted informational manipulation. To cultivate a deeply rooted, resilient public sphere within academic communities and wider society, contemporary pedagogy must transition toward developing an active, robust interethnic harmony and solidarity competence.

This competence refers to an integrated individual and professional attribute that combines deep multicultural literacy, empathetic emotional readiness, and advanced collaborative skillsets. It empowers individuals to consciously build bridges across cultural divides, defuse potential intergroup frictions, and actively collaborate with representatives of different ethnic backgrounds to achieve common developmental goals. The primary objective of this study is to theoretically design and empirically outline a structural-functional pedagogical model that provides a systematic blueprint for higher education administrators and educators to intentionally foster, monitor, and refine this critical competence among student youth.

The conceptualization of interethnic harmony within educational settings draws from several foundational pillars in pedagogical theory, sociology, and social psychology. To build a robust model, it is essential to trace how multicultural education, systemic structuralism, and competency-based models intersect. The foundational work on multicultural education, pioneered heavily by scholars such as James Banks, establishes that effective diverse education cannot be achieved simply by appending superficial celebratory elements (such as ethnic food festivals or folklore days) to an otherwise mono-cultural curriculum. Banks outlines five distinct dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure.

In European and post-Soviet academic contexts, this framework has evolved into intercultural education, emphasizing the active, dynamic dialogue and mutual transformation between cultures rather than their static, side-by-side coexistence.

In Uzbekistan, for instance, historical traditions of hospitality and regional coexistence — often conceptualized through state doctrines of national and universal values — serve as a localized socio-philosophical foundation. Scholars emphasize that building a stable multicultural state requires transforming historical patterns of cohabitation into conscious pedagogical strategies within modern university classrooms [1-5]. The global transition toward a competency-based paradigm in higher education demands that educational outcomes be measurable, actionable, and translatable to professional environments. Competence is distinct from mere knowledge (*knowing that*) or skill (*knowing how*); it incorporates the psychological readiness, ethical orientation, and contextual adaptability required to deploy those assets effectively under unpredictable real-world conditions. When applied to interethnic relations, solidarity competence can be categorized as a critical meta-competence or soft skill. It underpins a graduate's capacity to function in multinational corporations, diverse public sectors, and international research consortiums.

The structural-functional approach, derived from classical sociology (Talcott Parsons) and adapted for pedagogical design, views the educational process as an integrated system composed of specialized elements that perform specific functions to maintain the stability and development of the whole system. Designing a *pedagogical model* using this methodology requires identifying:

- The structural components (the static blueprint: what the model consists of).
- The functional mechanisms (the dynamic operation: how the components interact and what roles they fulfill).

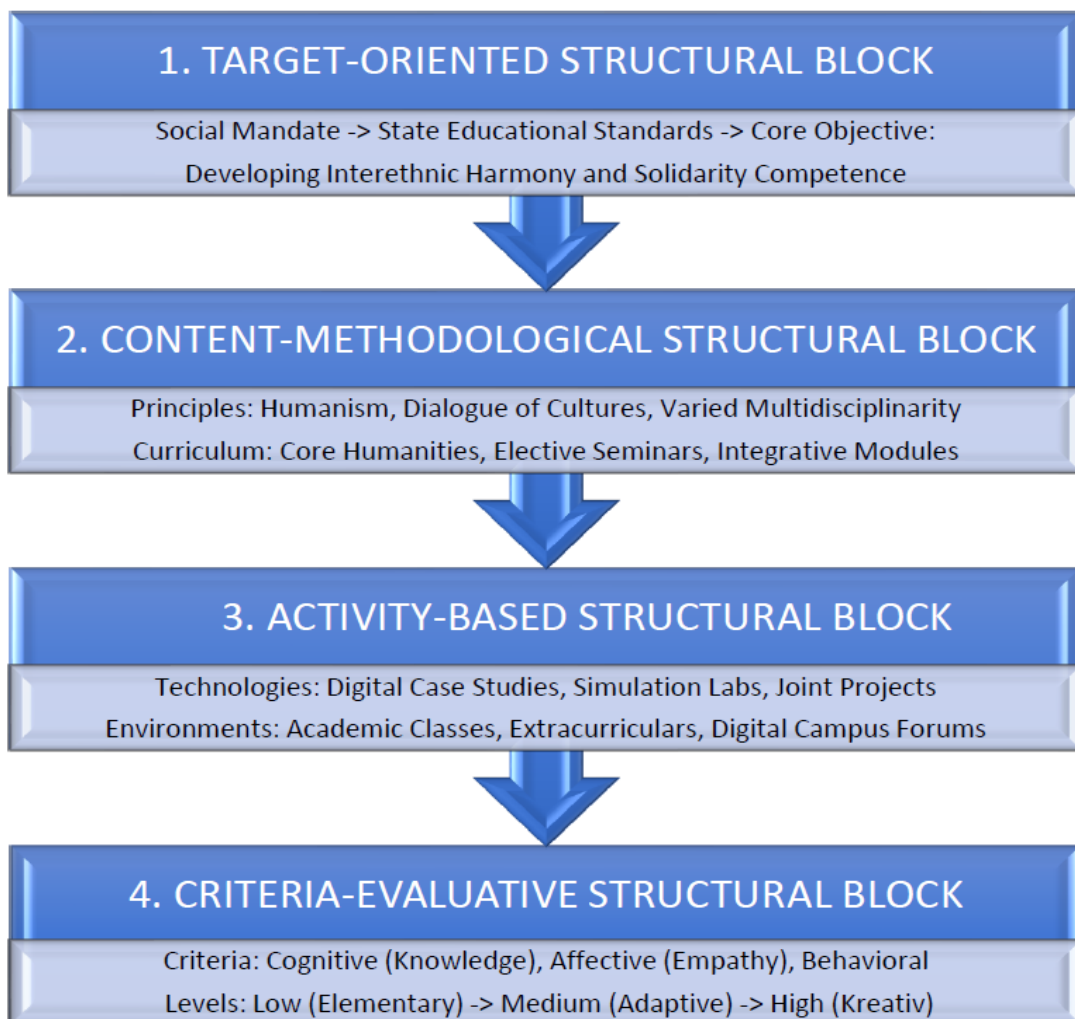
- The feedback loops (the evaluative mechanisms: how the model measures success and auto-corrects).

By combining these theoretical lines, this paper addresses a critical gap in the existing literature: the lack of a standardized, highly structured operational model that links abstract ethical ideals of harmony with clear pedagogical actions, tools, and evaluation metrics in higher education.

To construct the structural-functional model, a qualitative and systemic pedagogical modeling methodology was applied. The design process was guided by four core principles:

- ✓ Systemic Unity: No single component of the model exists in isolation; changes in the target block must directly dictate adjustments in evaluation and methods.
- ✓ Contextual Relevance: The model accounts for both globalized informational influences (such as social media trends) and regional cultural values.
- ✓ Actionability: The components are mapped to practical, executable educational practices within standard university curricula.
- ✓ Inclusivity: The model applies universally across disciplines, targeting STEM, humanities, and medical students alike.

The finalized model is composed of four structural blocks operated across four primary pedagogical functions, creating a highly integrated educational matrix.



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Each structural block represents a distinct phase and operational zone within the higher education environment.

The target-oriented block serves as the structural anchor of the entire model. It establishes the normative and philosophical justification for pedagogical intervention. This block synthesizes the social mandate issued by a globalizing, multi-ethnic society, the strategic development goals stipulated in national State Educational Standards, and the specific internal mission of the university. The central objective is defined explicitly as: The systematic cultivation of an integrated individual attribute that combines multicultural cognitive literacy, empathetic intercultural motivation, and pro-social collaborative behaviors, enabling active contribution to interethnic harmony.

This block answers the question: What concepts must be taught, and what principles must guide the curriculum? It defines the conceptual boundaries of educational materials. The block is underpinned by three core pedagogical principles:

- ✓ The Principle of Humanism: Placing the absolute value of human dignity above any ethnic, racial, or national categorization.
- ✓ The Principle of the Dialogue of Cultures: Treating cultures not as rigid, unyielding monoliths, but as dynamic, evolving open systems that enrich one another through contact.
- ✓ The Principle of Multidisciplinary Integration: Ensuring that themes of solidarity and harmony are not confined to a single isolated course, but are woven into language studies, history, professional ethics, and organizational behavior modules.

The content strategy manifests through three tiers: Core Curriculum (infusing global ethics into foundational history and philosophy courses), Elective Modules (specialized seminars on intercultural communication and conflict resolution), and Informal Curriculum (guest lectures by international experts, community leaders, and human rights advocates).

The activity-based block is the dynamic core where theory translates into lived experience. It transitions the student from a passive recipient of informational lectures to an active agent of cross-cultural interaction. This block encompasses both traditional classroom environments and extracurricular spaces. The activities are explicitly organized around high-engagement, collaborative pedagogical technologies:

- Cross-Cultural Simulation Labs: Controlled, structured environments where students are assigned roles within unfamiliar socio-cultural scenarios, forcing them to navigate foreign communication styles and unwritten social norms.
- Cooperative Project-Based Learning: Structuring academic assignments (such as engineering designs, business pitches, or public health campaigns) so that groups are intentionally diverse. Success is structurally dependent on collective cross-ethnic cooperation, forcing the practical application of team-building skills.
- Extracurricular Socio-Cultural Initiatives: University-backed student associations, peer-mentorship networks for international students, and community-service projects that break down social barriers through shared pro-social labor.

To ensure the model functions as a scientific system rather than an abstract ideal, the criteria-evaluative block provides the metrics required to track, assess, and mathematically analyze the development of the target competence. The model monitors progress across three distinct operational criteria:

- The Cognitive Criterion (Knowledge Base): Measures the depth and accuracy of a student's knowledge regarding human rights laws, national and international anti-discrimination legislation, cultural histories, religious traditions, and the psychological mechanisms of stereotyping.
- The Affective-Motivational Criterion (Emotional Readiness): Evaluates the level of internal motivation to engage with diverse populations, the expression of genuine cultural empathy, and the psychological reduction of ethnocentric prejudices.
- The Behavioral-Action Criterion (Practical Application): Tracks the frequency of active, constructive participation in cross-cultural collaborations, the deployment of non-violent communication during tense situations, and the voluntary leadership of inclusive socio-cultural initiatives [1-5].

To implement this model effectively, educators must evaluate students against clear developmental thresholds. The criteria-evaluative block categorizes students into three developmental levels. Students at this level view interethnic relations through an oversimplified, often monocultural lens. Their knowledge of other cultures is limited to surface-level stereotypes. While they may not exhibit explicit hostility, their tolerance is entirely passive. In ethnically diverse or tense environments, they experience high anxiety, withdraw into mono-ethnic peer enclaves, and lack the skills or confidence needed to participate in cross-cultural collaborative work. Students at this level possess a solid, stable understanding of multicultural ethics and international human rights frameworks. They consciously reject explicit prejudice and can successfully navigate typical, low-stress cross-cultural interactions within classrooms or workplaces. However, their skills are largely situational. When faced with complex, emotionally charged interethnic disputes or highly unfamiliar cultural contexts, they struggle to lead or mediate effectively, preferring to remain passive observers rather than active problem solvers. Students at this level display deep intercultural literacy and highly developed emotional intelligence. They demonstrate strong cross-cultural empathy and view diversity as an essential asset for systemic innovation and problem solving. They excel at managing high-stress intercultural situations and can defuse group tensions through non-verbal and verbal mediation. These individuals actively initiate multi-ethnic group projects, volunteer for international leadership roles, and display a fully integrated, lifelong commitment to societal solidarity.

Implementing a structural-functional model within contemporary higher education systems is a complex endeavor that faces distinct structural obstacles:

- Academic Ethnocentrism in Formal Curricula: Many long-standing university programs, particularly in traditional fields, maintain a rigid Eurocentric or deeply localized national focus that leaves little room for global multicultural integration.
- The Digital Counter-Trained Reality: The efforts of a university classroom can be undermined by algorithmic polarization on social media, where students are exposed to xenophobic rhetoric, nationalist propaganda, and divisive socio-political narratives.
- Faculty Isolation and Lack of Training: Professors are often highly accomplished specialists in their technical domains (such as mathematics, chemistry, or software engineering) but lack

the pedagogical training required to navigate cultural frictions within their own classrooms or intentionally structure inclusive group assignments.

To overcome these barriers and unleash the full potential of the model, three critical institutional conditions must be met:

- ✓ Comprehensive Faculty Professional Development: Universities must invest in systemic training programs that equip all instructional staff with intercultural communication competencies and inclusive teaching strategies.
- ✓ A Digitally Integrated Campus Environment: Diversity and solidarity must be integrated into the university's digital presence. This means featuring inclusive storytelling on campus media, running anti-prejudice digital campaigns, and hosting cross-cultural dialogue forums on official learning management platforms.
- ✓ Active Student-Led Governance Structures: The university must grant real agency to international and multicultural student unions. This ensures that solidarity initiatives are driven organically by student interest rather than feeling like top-down administrative requirements.

### Conclusion

Fostering interethnic harmony and solidarity among university students is a foundational requirement for building a stable, innovative, and resilient global society. Passive models of education that rely on abstract moral appeals or superficial celebrations of diversity are no longer sufficient to navigate the complex socio-political and informational challenges of the twenty-first century.

The structural-functional pedagogical model proposed in this paper offers a rigorous, actionable framework for higher education institutions. By organizing the educational process into highly integrated Target-Oriented, Content-Methodological, Activity-Based, and Criteria-Evaluative blocks — and driving them through adaptive, regulatory, communicative, and transformative functions — universities can systematically cultivate a measurable, durable competence in their student bodies. Ultimately, this shifts higher education beyond basic diversity management toward the intentional cultivation of enlightened, empathetic global citizens who possess both the will and the skill to champion human solidarity.

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