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PEDAGOGICAL HERITAGE AND PECULIARITIES OF THE CULTURES OF THE CAUCASUS

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Abstract

The goal of the research is to investigate the heritage of pedagogical traditions of the people living in the Caucasus and its place in traditional and family education.

The methods of the research are analysis of psychological, pedagogical and historical literature; analysis of the educational system of the ethnicities inhabiting the Caucasus; and practical application of folk pedagogy in families and educational institutions.

Key deliberations. In this paper we indicate that adults can effectively educate children only if the studying environment facilitates the children's self-education. In this context, it must be noted that integration of folk family education with pedagogical science and official school educational techniques may serve the purpose of multi-faceted preparation of the young generation for life.

Our research confirms the notion that folk education gives an important role to the concept of self-education, which is a significant achievement of folk pedagogy. A nation's spiritual heritage is the key to understanding and integration into worldwide human culture, without which human beings cannot realise themselves as creative individuals.

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Keywords: Ethnic pedagogy, Caucasus, family education, jamaat, jamaat traditions, humanism.



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1. Introduction

Ethnic education is one of the greatest spiritual values of any nation and is the underlying basis of the nation's entire culture. Its reintroduction and functioning in families and educational institutions is a relevant, socially important goal, which is pursued by pedagogical and parental communities, researchers of ethnic pedagogy, and by every adult member of society who participates in the education of the young generation.

The people of the Caucasus have centuries-long history rich with monumental tragedies and feats of heroism, and, owing to their ceaseless creative exploration, they have created a unique ethnic educational system, which is aimed at educating the young generation and addresses the most pressing problems of the nation.

Over the course of their entire history, these people had to live in harsh, wild mountains and protect their freedom from surrounding enemies with weapons in their hands. Such life has created an environment in which the young generation was taught how to achieve two main goals: to live a productive life at peace and to defend their homeland during war.

2. Problem Statement

Cultural heritage of every nation has incorporated social experience that spans many centuries. Considering the many nations represented in the Republic of Dagestan, rejuvenation of its society must undergo with respect to two important factors: its unique national culture and the values of humanity on the whole. Constant changes in life demand that every Dagestani citizen fully understand the reason for mutual respect that exists between the many nations of the Caucasus and the respect for people of other cultures. The Dagestani people must also respect traditional labour (stock-breeding, growing crops, crafts, and gardening), Dagestani lifestyle, the native language (spoken and written), behavioral rules (Dagestani ethics), law principles (adat and norms of human interaction), nature (careful use of animals, plants, and other natural resources), folk music, arts, principles of physical fitness, and others (Mirzoyev & Mirzoyeva, 2014).

Owing to these factors, the traditional educational system of the Caucasus ethnicities in its both forms (family and jamaat education) encouraged the young generation to become workers, creators, patriots, and defenders of their homeland.

3. Research Questions

In this context, the goal of this research was to investigate the characteristic environment of families living in the Caucasus, assess how this environment affects the development of personality in children, and reveal the principles of in-family education.

In accordance with the stated goal, much attention in this research was given to folk pedagogy because it is exactly folk pedagogy that possesses the appropriate means of formation, preservation, and further development of national culture.

Folk pedagogy is historically developed theory and practice of progressive education, raising children, and efficient management of society (Kairov & Bogdanova, 1997).

4. Purpose of the Study

Integration of traditional in-family education with pedagogical science and official school educational techniques serves the purpose of multi-faceted preparation of the young generation for different aspects of life, such as work, social activity, having a family, and bringing up children (Vasiltsova, 1993).

Interrelation between pedagogical theory and folk education, as well as mutual enrichment of these two fields, creates favourable social and pedagogical conditions for the introduction of humanistic ideas into the educational process at ethnic schools.

The relevance of this ethnic and pedagogical study is conditioned, on the one hand, by insufficient knowledge of the stated problem and, on the other hand, by the possible applications of millennium-old cultural experience of educating.

Study of the main principles and characteristic features of in-family pedagogy used by nations of the Caucasus region has led us to a conclusion that practical educational activity in families is based on folk wisdom, which manifests itself in traditions and moral laws of jamaat (a village community where knowledge is preserved by women who are well versed in spiritual values of their nation and wise male elders).

Educational traditions of jamaat encompass summarised experience of bringing up children and can be viewed as theory of folk pedagogy on which parents rely while educating their children. For this reason, in-family and jamaat (i.e., public) types of education are intertwined and inseparable. Such unity developed historically due to a need to satisfy pressing spiritual demands of the nation, and it is an undisputable advantage of folk education which is relevant to the people of the Caucasus even in modern life.

Another important factor of folk education is life traits peculiar to the people of the Caucasus: openness, mutual aid between people of the same and different ethnicities, benevolent attitude towards others, a sense of parental responsibility for the education of their children, respect for the old, veneration of the parents, and others

5. Research Methods

Study of the ethnic educational system of the people inhabiting the Caucasus and its experimental application in families, schools, and preschool organisations in combination with achievements of pedagogical science showed the high efficiency of the millennium-long folk (in-family) experience of educating the young.

The uniformed educational space of the Russian Federation with the many cultures present in it demands that the ethnic component of teaching be taken into consideration at educational institutions for children.

Inclusion of an ethnic component into educational programmes at ethnic schools, which is governed by the law “On education in the Russian Federation”, facilitates improvement in the educational process, introduces ideas of humanism, and promotes development of high moral values in children.

Being educated in the community is an inherent part of everyday life in the Caucasus. A proverb says, “Always keep an eye on the child”. In accordance with this concept, public opinion stipulates that folk educators’ keen eyes should always stay on the children. During everyday activities, at work, at

traditional musical events, or when a child is playing, thoughtful educators always try to find a way to promote personal growth of their wards.

The entire pedagogical heritage of predecessors shows the current generation what educational methods should be used to turn the young into worthy successors who will carry their traditions. For example, in a family, the educational function is performed by the parents; at work, it is performed by experienced mentors. Moreover, while the most common motivational tools at work include personal example, demonstration, explanation, giving a simple task to perform, and telling a proverb, in public people prefer to use epic tales, stories of previous and contemporary events, riddles, and satire (the most effective methods are encouragement, censure, and so on) to influence the young.

However, this does not mean that each educational method has strict borders of application. On the contrary, many folk methods can be used in a variety of situations, and this is an advantage of folk education: the very same educational tool can be effectively used in different circumstances. For example, at work or while playing, personal example is more effective than verbal advice; while dancing or playing, praise is expressed by paying close attention or applauding (but not by loud shouts and whistling, which is customary among the young); in a public place, a kind or wise word is considered to be appropriate. All this creates a continuous, uninterrupted educational system.

Due to the continuous quality of folk education, traditional Dagestani forms and methods of education can be used for the purpose of moral rejuvenation of society. Moreover, these methods can be used in different environments: at home, on the street, in public places, at leisure centres, and so on. Thus folk pedagogy has a large arsenal of educational techniques aimed at the younger generation, and these techniques must be restored.

It must be noted that the use of folk pedagogy brings the greatest results when families, preschool organisations, schools, and society in general are working actively on the problem of education. If modern schools start implementing progressive folk experience and parents start cooperating with teachers, then a collective search for forms and methods of education applicable in different spheres of children's lives, reliance on sensible public ideas, and the sound voice of folk pedagogy will restore the lost continuity of generations and help us to educate the young generation in the best Dagestani traditions.

6. Findings

Despite its wide functioning in families even in modern times, folk pedagogy of Caucasus nations remains insufficiently investigated. Fundamental studies on relevant problems of folk pedagogy still do not exist. It would be fair to say that talented poets, writers, and cultural luminaries of Avarian origin made for preservation and promotion of Avarian folk pedagogy more than professional scholars. Together with rich Avarian folklore that covers different genres, works of the aforementioned poets and writers can also be considered a valuable source of data for investigation of folk pedagogical wisdom (Magomedova, 2015).

Pedagogical heritage of Dagestani people is recognised and highly valued. Thoughts, ideas, and beliefs regarding various problems of education were touched upon and developed in works of Dagestani poets and writers. A significant contribution to systematisation and development of folk pedagogy was made by public figures and scholars.

Works of the first Dagestani educators of the Soviet era not only showed the progressive aspect of folk education but also created distinct concepts of education based on folk traditions (Mirzoyev, 2003).

However, in the last decades, papers on traditional culture and folk pedagogy have not always been given due credit, while it is exactly such works that remind people about their original spiritual values and protect society from complete moral degradation.

Dagestani moral pedagogy is a part of tremendous pedagogical experience that has been accumulated by countries of the entire world over millennia. Thus many traditions of the Dagestani people that touch upon the problem of personal growth appeared in ancient times.

In modern times, when such ethnic subjects as “Culture and traditions of the Dagestani people” and “Preparation of children for adult life” have finally become an important part of the regional component of educational programmes in Dagestani schools, a new goal has become evident: development of stronger connections between in-family and school education through adaptation of traditional values to modern needs (Mirzoyev, 2003).

A new trend has been recently observed: the many nations of Russia a starting to return to traditional, countrywide and universal human values. For the first time in the history of the Russian Federation, revitalisation of social, esthetic, political and cultural aspects of life is taking place with reliance on the single most important concept of culture: the concept of humanism.

It has become obvious that seemingly inevitable spiritual impoverishment of society can be halted with the help of unique traditions of over 100 ethnicities living in our country.

It is our firm belief that in-family pedagogy should be studied with regard to its connections to jamaat pedagogy (which is a traditional, public type of education), pedagogical science (ethnic pedagogy), and the practice of educational work at schools and preschool organisations. In this study, we tried to perform this difficult but important task.

Traditional education in the Caucasus is realised in two interconnected forms (in-family and jamaat (public) education), it governs all aspects of personal development, and its most important goal is to turn children into “perfect persons” whose every action is guided by dignity.

According to principles of traditional education of the Caucasus region, the most important role in education is given to the development of moral qualities. This study has shown that traditional education, when combined with achievements of modern pedagogical science and practices of public educational institutions, has great potential.

Analysis of literature data and experimental work performed in this study indicate that adherence to progressive folk traditions and high spiritual values brings great results. Not only does it promote comprehensive education of children but also strengthens spiritual foundations of families and reduces the rate of divorces and the number of incomplete families.

Social orphans are a phenomenon which is very rare and uncharacteristic of Avarian communities. Thus humanitarian traditions and spiritual values of Avarian families play a very important role in the development of a stable and effective pedagogical environment in families.

Analysis of the ethnic educational system of the Caucasus region clearly showed that this system employs a holistic approach to personal development. In the framework of this system, adults try to influence as many aspects of personal development as possible, and special attention is given to moral

education, which ultimately defines the success of children's education on the whole. These features are naturally realized while playing, working, or talking to people.

It is evident that folk pedagogy possesses an extensive understanding of the main aspects of education. Analysis of this understanding allows us to conclude that society recognizes the importance of a holistic approach to all-round education. In order to use such an approach to all tasks of folk education, educators will need to employ a range of teaching methods, at times unconventional ones. These methods will ensure the efficiency of preteens' and teenagers' education.

Public view on the concept of a perfect person is important only when this view actually influences the minds of the young generation. This belief has historically established itself in the consciousness of people. Folk education is not limited either by the time or place of meeting of the young with the old. It is incorrect to think that moral education belongs solely to the sphere of traditions, which some researchers of folk pedagogy have repeatedly tried to prove.

Comprehensive analysis of the educational potential of in-family pedagogy in the Caucasus region clearly and undoubtedly indicates that a new methodological system combining traditional in-family education with achievements of modern pedagogical science will improve school and in-family education and shift the focus of education towards ideas of humanism.

7. Conclusion

Folk philosophy regards education ("creation of a person") as a whole multi-faceted process of creating a personality. This process happens in the mind of a person through learning and adaptation of humanistic traditions that can be applied both in real and partly artificial (intentionally created for pedagogical purposes) life situations. Study and implementation of pedagogical heritage of the people inhabiting the Caucasus is a relevant task of ethnic pedagogy in general and ethnic schools in particular.

Trying to analyse the most relevant achievements and characteristic features of folk pedagogy of the Caucasus region, we also touched upon the few traditions and moral standards that do not serve modern educational purposes and have no ideological aspect.

The greatest testament to the efficiency of Caucasus folk pedagogy is our people themselves: the generations of our predecessors, who were raised on noble patriotic, moral and labour principles of our nation, and the new generation, who inherited the best features of the national character from their ancestors and managed to preserve a connection to the past.

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