

**IFTE 2018**  
**4th International Forum on Teacher Education**

**DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL QUALITIES IN  
STUDENTS AT SCHOOL**

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***Abstract***

The goal of the research is to analyse the content (conditions, tools, forms, and methods) of moral education of school students and elucidate potential capabilities of national and universal human culture to promote moral education of students with respect to specific regional and social conditions of their environment through the use of local historical, literary and geographical lore.

Study of school students' personality is a necessary link in the process of moral education. Study of students' personality during moral education is an analysis of how the acquired moral standards are manifested in students' actions and behaviour. Standards of morality are reflected in students' attitude towards society, homeland, parents, labour, people, and themselves, and these standards manifest themselves in such valuable qualities as patriotism, sense of community, camaraderie, humanism, dignity, a respectful attitude to labour, and others. These qualities are a union of consciousness, reason, and feelings, and they are expressed through personal beliefs, determination, perseverance in a fight against the immoral, adherence to high moral values, and ability for compassion.

This paper emphasises the notion that moral orientation of personality is manifested not in single deeds but through its general activity. It is evaluated, first and foremost, through an ability of an individual to reveal his or her view of life. Successful development of moral qualities in school students depends on the competence of teachers, variety of used educational methods, and children's emotional response.

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**Keywords:** Moral development, moral education, national culture, national pedagogy, national traditions, moral code.



## **1. Introduction**

Moral education of students is one of the key problems that every parent, teacher, educational institution, society, and country in general confronts.

Modern Russian and, undoubtedly, multicultural Dagestani society exists in a situation in which the problem of moral education has become serious. Characteristic features of this situation are as follows:

- a lack positive life guidelines for the young generation;
- drastic deterioration of the moral state of society;
- a decline in the amount of cultural and leisure work aimed at the young generation;
- a sharp decline in physical health of the young generation;
- goal-oriented moral education is being substituted with momentary declarative and entertaining events, etc.

Moral education of students implies a need for goal-oriented work aimed at developing proper morality, mentality, and behaviour in students

## **2. Problem Statement**

The goal of this study is to determine techniques that will improve the process of moral education of students. This is the first study that elucidates potential capabilities of national and universal human culture to promote moral education of students with respect to specific regional and social conditions of the Republic of Dagestan through the use of local historical, literary and geographic lore.

## **3. Research Questions**

The study sets to answer what techniques can improve the process of moral education of students. In addition, the research looks at whether it is possible to to promote moral education of students with respect to specific regional and social conditions of their environment through the use of local historical, literary and geographical lore.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The goal of the research is to analyse the content (conditions, tools, forms, and methods) of moral education of school students and elucidate potential capabilities of national and universal human culture. The purpose of this study is to determine techniques that will improve the process of moral education of students.

## **5. Research Methods**

The method of the research is analysis of pedagogical literature and advanced pedagogical methods of moral education of students.

## **6. Findings**

Researchers and practicing teachers, studying all the best that was created by the educational system of our country, have always pursued the goal of raising intellectually developed, rich with spiritual energy,

physically and morally complete individuals that are needed in society. A work titled 'Principles of moral education' is a testament to that pursuit; it has been used in our country for a long time, and it openly declared, '... In educational process, presentation of moral truths in a clear manner is not enough: they must also become a goal of every individual's life, an inherent part of one's ambitions and personal happiness' (Kairova & Bogdanova, 1997).

Education of the young generation is one of the most important tasks of any nation that strives to transfer social and historical knowledge to its progeny. At the same time, the entire human society comprises many distinct nations with their own traits: relations, deeds, and educational methods, in other words, 'national standards'. However, no unique national educational model exists: they all inevitably possess features common to many nations. One such feature is the need to develop moral qualities in people, and its key concepts are morality, spirituality, and values.

A tremendous role in the moral development of school students is given to teachers and their competency in educational methods. Due to that, it is of great importance that teachers should design and apply unique educational programmes, classes, and extracurricular activities that accentuate traditional, progressive and socially approved moral and spiritual traits of personality. Special emphasis must be given to the true values of the native culture, region, and country because it is exactly these values that are really important for the optimal development of morality, mentality, and behaviour of students. Educators should always keep in mind that 'people perceive moral education as the development of moral qualities that are necessary for life and functioning in society: modesty, humanity, honesty and sincerity, fairness, friendship and camaraderie, diligence, a sense of community, bravery, fortitude, devotion to their nation and homeland' (Aliyeva, 2003).

Therefore, the key notion in the sphere of morality and spirituality is that of good. A person of high moral qualities is benevolent, determined (in one's intentions and actions) to do good through mercy, conscientiousness, and self-perfection. It is exactly good and not evil that is considered to be a standard of relationships and behaviour in any society. Aristotle said that good is the reason for every act: for a healer good is health, for a warrior good is victory, and for every action it is the purpose for which everything else is done.

Development of respectful relationships is an inherent part of complete moral education of students. Owing to that, the following activities are considered expedient:

- conversations and debates about ethical matters;
- reading, analysis, and categorisation of moral ideas drawn from fiction;
- meetings of students with workers of culture and science, elders, wise men, spiritual leaders of the nation, and experienced teachers;
- discussion and collective evaluation of various positive and negative actions of the classmates.

Another factor that must be taken into consideration is teachers' influence on the children during these activities.

Moral education of students must be designed with respect to spiritual and secular aspects, while extra-curricular activities must continue the work started in class. Spiritual enlightenment is an inseparable part of moral education. Therefore, while designing programmes and the content of moral-oriented work, educators should take into consideration their students' age and monitor all the stages of the students' personal growth.

As an integral part of spiritual education, scholars distinguish patriotic education. This aspect is best realised through class meetings, activities that commemorate the victory in Second World War, literary meetings (which clearly reveal the patriotic potential of fiction), and 'Days of spirituality and culture' (which include meetings with workers of culture and science, experienced teachers, and people of considerable life experience). Students can learn many interesting facts about valuable human principles from old, wise people. Much in life, including their first professional skills, children learn from their grandparents. The latter help the children to grasp the subtleties of interpersonal and social relations, mysteries of plant and animal life, and much more. Grandmothers introduce children to the origins of folk poetry and teach them their native language. Most importantly, these people, who have lived long, difficult lives, teach children kindness. Kindness and love coming from adults teach children to take after them: be humane, considerate and attentive towards other people. Another relevant aspect of moral education is the formation of respectful relationships between children and the development of appropriate moral feelings, consciousness, and behaviour (Magomedova, 2013).

An important parameter upon which children's introduction into social and, first of all, school life depends is their psychological readiness. The term 'psychological readiness' refers to a certain level of intellectual and personal development of a child, as well as communicative components of a child's readiness for school education. Considerable attention in the system of moral education is given to such a necessary prerequisite for the development of children's moral standards as interaction with other children. This interaction encourages communication, develops relationships between children, and gives them an opportunity to absorb social and historical experience, comprehend themselves and their peers, understand their abilities and possibilities. For this reason, educational process must be designed with respect to both spiritual and secular components, while extracurricular activities must be a logical continuation of the work started in class.

Among various forms of spiritual and moral education of school students, educators distinguish local lore. It is no coincidence that experienced teachers often use local lore in class and during extracurricular activities, and this practice gives results.

In this context, educators may refer to the tremendous experience of Bulach Gadzhiev, an esteemed researcher of local lore, famous national teacher, honorary citizen of the city of Buinaksk, and an author of over 40 books, among which there are 'Dagestan in History and Legends', 'Gates of the Dagestani Mountains', 'At the foot of Sala-Tau', 'Following M. Y. Lermontov through Dagestan', 'Captives of the Mountains of Dagestan', 'Everybody Had Their Own War', 'I Am a Teacher', 'Secrets of the Mountains of Dagestan', 'The Road to Gunib', 'At the Foot of the Gimrinsky Range', and others.

However, having analysed how children study nature and develop their speaking and writing skills at classes in reading and the Russian language (which are main subjects), we have come to a conclusion that children know little about their home region and have insufficient knowledge of their region's past and present. Moreover, even the little information they know is abstract. The lack of concrete details in children's knowledge causes difficulties in perception and understanding of the course content. In order to increase children's cognitive interest in the history of their home region, its nature, past, present, and future, teachers must perform an analysis of this problem and determine optimal ways of imparting local lore at their school. Teaching local lore is a crucial condition for moral, spiritual and, even more so, patriotic education of children. Teachers must give clear answers to the questions 'Why do children need to study

their home region?', 'What do they need to study?', 'How should teachers impart the knowledge of local lore to their students?' and so on.

Equally or even more important role in teaching local lore is given to organised extracurricular and out-of-school activities that are oriented towards personal growth. Success of this work depends on the immediate connection with the social environment (parents, non-governmental organisations, institutions that spread knowledge about village, regional and city culture and can help children to grasp social, cultural and natural environment of their home region). Many years of pedagogical experience accumulated at schools of the Republic of Dagestan (Middle School № 5 in Buinaksk, Middle School № 39 in Makhachkala, Leninkent Municipal Educational Institution № 35, and others) showed that continuous work related to local lore improves children's understanding of their place in the surrounding world ('I am my city'), the role of the Republic of Dagestan in Russian history and culture ('I am my city, my region, and my motherland'). Such educational work does not substitute regional values for those of the entire country and, at the same time, promotes moral maturity and the development of civic consciousness in children.

As a school subject, study of nature gives teachers fertile ground for developing moral qualities in children. Studying this subject, school students systemise and expand knowledge of their home region, intricacies of interactions between people and nature, expand knowledge of natural conditions and resources, and learn new information about plants, animals, and climate. Classes in study of nature should present information about home nature in different forms: through excursions, creative work, meetings with people of various professions, discussions, and others. It is exactly in this manner that school gives children foundations for cognitive interest in studying their home city and region (as part of the surrounding microclimate) and creates conditions for the development of moral qualities. Children discover basics of a respectful and caring attitude to nature, learn to interact with it, and comprehend the importance of the surrounding world, which, in turn, promotes the development of children's morality and behaviour.

Great potential for moral education of school children lies in such a subject as 'Culture and traditions of Dagestani ethnicities'. This discipline provides ample opportunity for moral education of school students. It helps them to perceive, consider, and understand universal human principles of morality and spirituality, rules and goals of their own and closely related nations, their social wisdom and experience. This subject also pre-pares children for life in multinational and multi-religious Dagestani and Russian society (Mirzoyev, 2003).

Comprehensive analysis of teaching methods used at classes in 'Culture and traditions of Dagestani ethnicities' shows great opportunities for moral development in the form of briefings, round tables, and, above all, multidisciplinary classes that cover such topics as 'Traditional reverence of the old in Dagestani society', 'Traditions of mutual aid', 'Etiquette of the Dagistani people', 'Honour code in the Caucasus', 'Women's behaviour in society', 'Traditional reverence of the old in society', 'Family ethics and cultural behaviour of the Dagestani people', 'Adat and sharia law', 'Leisure activities of Dagestani ethnicities', 'Folk recreational activities and games', 'Culture and traditions of Russian-speaking ethnicities of Dagestan', 'The place of religion in mod-ern Dagestani society', 'Friendship and love', 'Image of an ideal Dagestani person', 'Image of an ideal woman of the Caucasus', 'Heirs to heroic traditions of the Caucasus', 'Religion as a part of national culture and a factor of moral education', 'National Dagestani mentality', 'The role of national traditions in the development of a true person', 'Traditions of peace and concord', 'Namus: national moral code', 'Moral code of behaviour of Dagestani ethnicities', and others. It is worth

mentioning that at classes in 'Culture and traditions of Dagestani ethnicities' pupils design their own code of honour and conscience, make reports, submit papers, and perform small research. Such classes touch upon the most relevant aspects of life and allow every school student to express their opinion on current problems of spiritual and moral development, education, and formation of a socially important mindset of a patriot of the republic and country.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper views the development of moral and spiritual qualities (moral and spiritual education) as an interaction between teachers and students aimed at absorption of the system of moral and spiritual values of society and as an act of reinforcement of these values in a person's attitude towards himself, other people, and the surrounding world.

The goal of spiritual and moral education is to instill the values of humanity and existence into school students and to help them find their place in the country and the world.

Processes that reflect nations' aspiration for preservation of their identity ("national revival") are a result of attempts to erase ethnic boundaries (among other areas, in education). Their extreme instances manifest themselves through international conflicts in Russia and the world. Speaking at the First Assembly of Russian Nations, R. Gainutdin (Chairman of the Spiritual Board of Central European Russia) said that Russian nations are made different not to fight or oppose, but to comprehend each other, which brings about respect for national traits of others and unification for the sake of common goals. This makes our country strong and able to overcome any difficulties.

Both Russian and foreign legislation systems consider introduction of the young to cultural national traditions to be one of the possible solutions to this problem. According to the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (as of 1990), special attention must be given to developing respect for the child's own cultural identity and patterns, for the social values of the country in which the child is living, and for civilisations different from the child's own.

The leading role of school in spiritual and moral education of the young through the means of traditional culture is also outlined in regional legislation. Education is one of the major social institutions that further ideas of international concord and patriotism. Consequently, ethno cultural and ethno social functions of school must be restored.

In this context, return of national culture to the minds of school students becomes a task of modern education. Pursuit of this goal will make culture that is native to many generations an integral part of their personal development.

It must be noted that restoration of traditional national mechanisms of perception, understanding, consideration, and application of both national and universal human cultural values in the life of the modern and future generations is undoubtedly necessary and socially important (Kazarenkova, 1999).

It is in every society's interests to preserve centuries-long pedagogical and educational experience and to transfer it to the young generation; otherwise not only development but even existence of society becomes impossible. Preservation and multiplication of pedagogical experience and, most of all, spiritual and moral potential of generations depends on the educational system, which, in turn, is formed with respect

to the world view and cultural development of Russian society. The key figure in the resolution of this crucial problem has always been and remains the noble image of the teacher.

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