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## Ethno-Cultural Education of Schoolchildren in the Education System of Belarus

**Key words:** national strategy, cultural heritage, education, native language, national values, ethno-cultural traditions

### Abstract

In the National strategy for persistent socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2020 the strategic goal in the field of culture is to ensure continuity in the development of the Belarusian culture. In today's reality ethno-cultural education involves focus on ethnic culture with a reliance on cultural traditions and native language, the latter being the main carrier of spiritual culture and the means of manifesting national self-consciousness. Today as never before the younger generation is in dire need of social guidelines, based on national values in line with the universal directionality. Ethno-cultural traditions inter alia awaken genetic memory in pupils, provide intergenerational continuity, greatly increase the effectiveness of the educational process.

### Introduction

The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first one were marked by stormy resurgence of ethno-national processes, embracing all aspects of society activities and bringing the problem of ethnos to the number of global world problems. School cannot stay away from these processes, and is obliged to thoroughly and comprehensively study the problems of ethno-cultural development and to organize education of youth in accordance with changes not only in socio-economic conditions, but also taking into account special national effects: specific moments of lifestyle, forms of culture and way of life, folk customs and traditions, national character, habits and codes of conduct, inherent to people, etc.

In Belarus a lot has already been and is still being done to study people's material and spiritual heritage, features of the flow of historical processes and its development. Such native researchers as I. Kalachova, N. Katovich, A. Krivonosov, A. Orlova, L. Rakova, V. Saleev, E. Sermyazhko, S. Snapkovskaya, I. Sycheva, V. Chechet etc., investigating the originality of the national pedagogical culture of Belarusian people, carried out the idea of the necessity to use educational experience of ancestors in modern terms. In pedagogical boxes of today's schools there are some specific designs and methodical guidelines on carrying out certain events and introduction to the educational process of some approaches of ethno-national nature. Noting the apparent lack of this kind of developments for organization of a practical full-scale ethno-cultural focus of the Republic's schools

activity. We should draw attention to the more than modest results of pedagogical researches in the field of determination the nature, content and the main ways of ethno-cultural education of schoolchildren. Only by defining common approaches to the formation of ethno-cultural orientation of an individual as to the basis of integration into the global culture, it'll be possible to fill them with a specific content and give them a backbone character.

## The main results

In the National strategy for persistent socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2020 the strategic goal in the field of culture is **to ensure continuity in the development of the Belarusian culture**. Among the tasks, ensuring its realization, the following are named:

- preservation and development of the cultural heritage, national and cultural originality of the Belarusian people, the Belarusian language and expansion of its application sphere;
- ensuring conditions for free development of the cultures of all social and ethnic groups living in Belarus.

In solving these tasks an important role is given to education as to the main institution of reproduction and development of society in general, because thanks mostly to it the components of ethnic culture persist and develop. Moreover, ethno-cultural values are just based on educational ones. It is education that gives every person the opportunity to self-identify as a representative of a particular culture. It creates conditions for an equal dialogue in any ethno-cultural environment. Education like no other sector has the ability to successfully synthesize ethno-national and universal values, so the first thing it should work for is unity, integrity and harmony in human societies. True education is not limited to a simple training and instead solves the problem of personality formation in all its multidimensional fullness of intelligence and ethno-cultural development, so it deserves the leading role in harmonization of private, national and universal interests and values.

**The formation of personality's ethnic culture**, does not deny, but rather involves introduction to the universal achievements of the world culture. The structure of personality of a representative of the modern ethno-cultural tradition should include civil and ethnic identity and intercultural competence. On the one hand, deep study of the universal culture helps every

person to interpret and better understand the features of his own people's cultural heritage, stimulates the development of ethnic consciousness and multifaceted ethnic activity. On the other hand, integration into the world culture, comprehension of peaks of the humankind achievements are possible only after mastering the cultural heritage of your own ethnic group, your people. The universal, common to all mankind mission of education cannot and should not conflict with its ethno-cultural function. Taking place within the framework of multicultural education, the idea of equality of all cultures and subcultures and their impact on human leads to ethno-national marginality, because of which a person does not master any culture, does not adhere to certain value orientations.

The requirements for organization of education with a reliance on socio-cultural features of the place and time of its implementation were clearly formulated by F.A.V. Disterveg in the principle of cultural conformity of education. The idea of building a national school lies in the well-known concept of K.D. Ushinsky about the nationality of education. Development of this field in the history of the Russian and foreign idea made it possible to obtain a number of important conclusions. *Firstly*, doubts about the need for the ethno-national component in education are rejected. As V.N. Soroka-Rosinsky has it, "now there can be no question about the right of national education in the Russian school, because national feeling is a great, ineradicable and terrible force. It should be nurtured, should be cultivated" (Soroka-Rosinsky V.N., 1991, pp. 125–126). Socio-political events of the last decades in Russia and in many other countries confirm the rightness of these words.

*Secondly*, the desire to oppose national education to priorities and values of the world culture impoverishes both of them, leads to national self-isolation, undermines the very essence of good education. The role of national education is not to divide, but to unite nations and generations, and orient to the future. On this occasion, M.M. Rubenstein noted that "we can combine and identify the universal idea at school on a careful study of everything native, national (but of not only it alone!). All studies should be saturated with tendency – a spirit, so every nation with its existence and in its own way will give perhaps more not only to itself and its sons, but to the whole humankind and humanity" (Rubinstein M.M., 1920, p. 393).

*Thirdly*, at any level of saturation of education with the ethno-cultural component harmonization of national and universal values should not push back to another plan the value of a particular individual. Mak-

ing the conclusion of the need of ethno-cultural directionality of educational content, modern Russian scientists V. Belovolov and S. Belovolov emphasize that “the main purpose of educational system should become the creation of a humanistic atmosphere, focused on the personal approach in the formation of every child” (Belovolov V.A. 2002, p. 44).

*Fourthly*, the ethno-cultural construction of education involves organic inclusion into its content the concept of “civil” and “state.” Taking care of the development of ethnic culture, state has the right to rely on an adequate attitude to itself.

In today’s reality **ethno-cultural education** involves focus on ethnic culture with a reliance on native language and cultural traditions, organically integrated into the world culture. In fact, the vector of ethnic culture of education should be directed not to the ethnic past, but relying on ethnic identity, to the raise of good breeding level to the level of multiculturalism.

Features of national and ethnic culture are primarily reflected by **language**. It’s the main carrier of spiritual culture, national self-consciousness is manifested through it. Due to historical circumstances in the Republic of Belarus two state languages exist. Therefore, the educational process is carried out on a bilingual basis. A school graduate should be fluent in Belarusian and Russian and be able to freely communicate in one of the global languages. Education in general and ethnic in particular, is largely based on word, educational opportunities of which are well known. Native language is not just an outward sign of an individual belonging to his ethnic group. The main difference between ethnic languages lies not just in different names of the same objects, phenomena, events, but in their different vision. It’s through his language that a person joins the outside world, lives in it distinctively from the speakers of other languages. Due to language people leave to descendants a legacy of their worldview, their ideals and values, their understanding of good and evil, their vision of social arrangement. Common language is the most important means of building a sense of group identity, cohesion of ethical community, historical memory indirectly materializes in it. It’s necessary to take into account not only richness and diversity of vocabulary, but also the structure, not only external forms of meaning expression, but also the very meaning itself. It is necessary to take into account the main feature: it is in the structure of every national language that traces of thoughts of parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and ancestors are embodied, their life and psychology and philosophy”.

One of the objectives of ethnic culture formation is **patriotic education** of the younger generation. Of course, the concept of patriotism goes beyond the scope of the national, it often gets a state coloring, but is initially localized geographically by the place of birth and social environment of the early stages of human life. In Greek patriotism means “the fathers’ land”, “homeland.” The concept of “small homeland” is understood as the place of birth, and the “great homeland” as the state and the society where a person lives and the culture into which he’s integrated. Currently the concept of “patriotism” also reflects a person’s civil position, and at the same time protection of national interests. Patriotism is seen as an integral feature of ethnicity, a natural property of personality. It begins with love for the mother, native places’ beauty experiences, and develops into a sense of pride for your Motherland, your people, grows into a real manifestation of patriotic beliefs and feelings through deeds and actions. But ethnic revival cannot be directed to formation of biased attitude to your ethnicity, assertion of nationalistic views accompanied by a manifestation of intolerance towards other peoples. A properly organized process of patriotic education eliminates the ethnocentric tendencies, develops the idea of what homeland is, on the basis of understanding cultural uniqueness of his people, a pupil forms internationalism, civicism and humanism in himself.

The centuries-old teaching experience of our ancestors convinces us in the **educational effectiveness of ethno-cultural traditions** of people. Today as never before the younger generation is in dire need of social guidelines, based on national values in line with the universal directionality. The construction of the educational process on ethnic culture traditions gives it a humanistic nature, promotes the formation of value orientations, moral and spiritual stability, civil-patriotic position, ethnic identity. Ethno-cultural traditions inter alia awaken genetic memory in pupils, provide intergenerational continuity, greatly increase the effectiveness of the educational process.

Folk customs and traditions as stable norms and principles of human behavior, reflect human relationships, person’s attitude to nature, form social position in society and enrich the whole process of ethno-cultural education. Ethno-cultural traditions are the most important educational means, centuries of people’s educational experience and worldly wisdom for education of younger generations are condensed in them. National world view, national mentality and features of national culture as a whole are focused in them. The most im-

portant feature of traditions and customs is continuity. It contributes to the experience of previous generations smoothly entering the life of new ones. Thanks to it, the whole rhythm of life does not permit jerks, jumps, radical revolutionary changes. The new is born out of the old, innovating, developing, modifying it according to new socio-cultural conditions. Hence the educational effectiveness and psychological comfort. Not less important feature of customs and traditions is their repeatability. In fact, repeatability of certain norms, principles, types and forms of relations in society until they become needs and habits of most people creates traditions and rites. From this point of view it can be said that traditional education largely and primarily represents the formation of good habits.

The Slavs historically have many folk customs and traditions closely intertwined, organically merged with the Christian values, and because of that their educational role increased even more. As in the Christian ethics, moral value orientations are the core of the culture of the Belarusian people. Therefore the main task of national traditions is moral education. From ancient times, the Belarusians had such values as communality, collectivism, humanism, cult of labor, cult of mother, cult of family, tolerance, honesty, justice, patriotism, compassion, humility, self-criticism, a sense of duty, awareness, conscientiousness, and others firmly established. According to popularly ethical views the whole life should be based on the laws of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. The pursuit of common good through happiness of every person – that is the basic postulate of the Belarusians' morale.

One of the main drawbacks of the modern organization of ethno-culturally oriented education is building it on particular fragments of popular culture. Often from the whole stratum of popular culture one or more components are selected, and on their basis the work on familiarizing students with the heritage of their ancestors is built. As a result, students cannot form a holistic view of ethnic culture.

Carefully designed, theoretically, methodologically, organizationally and pedagogically secured ethno-cultural education of students will allow them to understand the **systemic construction of national culture**, ensuring integrity, stability and viability of ethnic community. The very human life from birth to death in popular culture is incorporated into a holistic cycle of traditional festivals, rites, rituals, which determine moral guidelines, set the rhythm of life, build character. Also, during each year a person is included into a holistic calendar-ceremonial complex, deciding all

kinds of educational tasks, providing full communication between people with a clever alternation of certain types of work and rest. The usage of popular culture's pedagogical potential in the modern educational process will help to create a foundation of a holistic system of personality formation, overcome the barriers between school subjects, syncretically combine training and education into a single process.

Ethnic culture, built on integrity, consistency of world view contributes to formation of a harmonic and holistic individual. Through the whole oral folk art penetrates the idea of unity between the present, the past and the future, ancestors and descendants, blood relatives and intermarried families. And in general the idea of the world integrity unites by many semantic approaches the most diverse phenomena of nature and society. Calendar-ceremonial complex, first of all, reflects the unity between man and nature. The system of relations between human and nature, having received an extraordinary emotional coloring through the calendar-ritual culture, contributes to the fact that anyone, having deeply felt himself as an integral particle of nature, will treat it respectfully. By the way, this implies the **natural conformity of popular education**. Unlike the institutionalized pedagogy the purpose of education here is not a certain result, but man himself. The purpose of education is not acquisition of knowledge to dominate nature, but comprehension of wisdom of the natural order and existence in harmony with it. The shift of emphasis from person's knowledge does not belittle its role. In popular pedagogy education is not an external effect for transfer of the experience accumulated, but an external influence to arouse internal reserves to acquisition of this experience. And again here clearly prevail holistic artistically figurative methods of cognition, based mainly on synthesis, which are clearly lacking in today's schools. Thus, the inner world of an individual greatly enriches with a sensual experience of reality.

In general, development of ethno-cultural education system should, using the most effective approaches of the modern pedagogical theory and practice, provide for **inclusion of ethno-cultural values into the educational process**. Of the whole variety of cultures for us, Belarusians, the closest one in the historical, geographical and spiritual sense is the Slavic culture. Introduction to the Slavic culture will enable students to more productively study the achievements of the world culture. It cannot be ignored in construction of curricula and programs of study of the Slavic literature, art, history, science and traditions.



A special place should be given to creation and introduction to the educational process of integrated courses, taking into account the ethno-cultural component, author's innovative programs, considering state and nationally-regional specificity. In this regard, school courses of "Ethnology", "Regional studies", "Folk Art" and others have proved themselves useful, work on the complex programs such as "People's Culture", "Heritage" and others is especially effective. Ethno-cultural education involves using of various forms of work: lessons, electives, section classes, competitions, festivals, fairs, games, hiking, excursions, expeditions. Moreover, every single lesson, every single extracurricular activity, each pedagogical approach should be subordinated to cultural life integrity and organically enter the system of educational work.

Inclusion **into the system of useful things** that educate students is important. Moreover, the things can be both directly related to ethnic culture, ethnic traditions (e.g. folklore collection) and as if externally not related to ethnic culture, but built on traditional national values, for example action "Mercy" – caring for the elderly, community work, environmental protection measures, etc. It is because of popular educational experience that in the modern school formation of good habits should be seen as a basis of the educational process. Among folk at the empirical level a conclusion was made long ago that for some reason even today causes debates among scientists, that morality is formed on the level of subconsciousness, emotions, habits, and not on the level of knowledge. Knowledge, especially ethical, although forming the basis of morality, are not the motivating force of moral behavior. Only moral beliefs, interacting with the moral feelings dictate moral action. Without an emotional attitude to reality, it is difficult to form internal impulses for the appropriate behavior.

A special place in the organization of ethno-cultural education should be given to **organization of the vital activity environment**. *Firstly*, it's school environment, where with the efforts of teachers and students an appropriate psychological and moral atmosphere is formed. Everything matters here – from the interior design to any informal activity in any way related to ethnic culture. *Secondly*, it is family environment with certain conditions of domestic labor, traditions and understanding of the importance of ethno-cultural education tasks. Pedagogical potential of family ethnic culture can be actively used directly in the educational process. *Thirdly*, it is non-school environment with its multiple correlations and relationships. Here it is equally important both to neutralize the negative com-

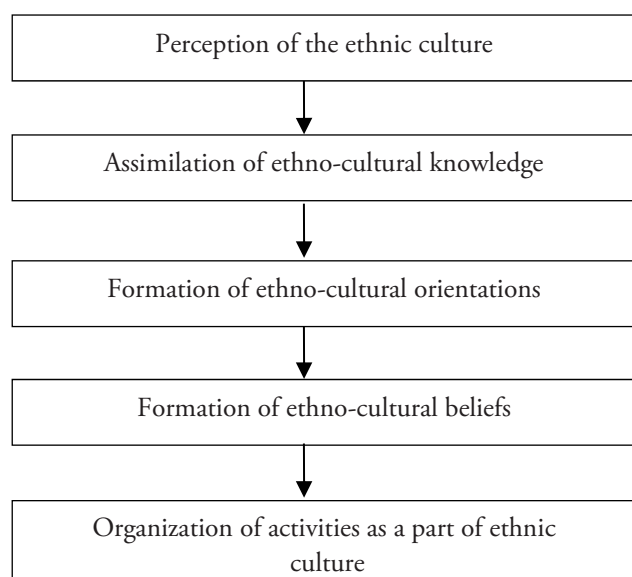
ponents and update and enrich the ethno-pedagogical means. School impact on a corresponding situation in every environment is largely different, but it is possible and necessary. Educational institutions should work not only with pupil himself, not only with his family, but also with his inner circle.

There are **two major mistakes** in familiarizing students with values of ethnic culture. *The first one* lies in episodic, fragmentary nature of this work. *The second one* – in attitude to ethnic culture as to an archaism, a "museum rarity", its elements "decorate" particular events and manifestations of the modern culture. People's culture often takes place on stage and in museum. As correctly noted V.D. Shadrikov, "a child, which is very important, should live with his native culture and within it, and other cultures he should know. To live and to know – these are the deep differences in the organization of the educational process in relation to native cultures" (Shadrikov V.D., 1993, p. 112). All complexity of work on the formation of ethnic culture lies in providing a system of means to revive, to develop national culture, and, which is the most important, authenticity of its manifestation.

A significant place in the systemic organization of students ethno-cultural education belongs to **folklore**, which in an artistically symbolic form absorbs manifestations of ethnic consciousness, being public in nature and aimed at the regulation of human relations with the outside world. The function of folklore is providing, maintaining and updating of ethno-historical links of intersystematic order.

Familiarizing children with folklore from an early age largely activates the process of ethical authentication. Use of folklore heritage in real life, not in the form of theatrical rites is even more significant. This may be a search and cognitive activity, development of national traditions, diverse practical work with folklore material, etc.

**The model of ethno-cultural educational process** includes goals, objectives, content, principles, methods and forms, adequate to traditionally-domestic teaching culture and modern pedagogical approaches. Integration processes should penetrate all activities, joining students to cultural folk traditions. Ethno-cultural education is based, beginning with cognitive study of ethnic culture elements by students, then proceeds to forming on their basis a specific attitude to outward things and themselves, and finally ends with a specific behavior, specific activities, fitting to the value attitudes of that ethnic group. Schematic model of ethno-cultural education looks like that:



The model of ethno-cultural education

This model shows a schematic sequence of the steps of ethno-cultural personality formation. The process itself, of course, occurs in a complex, continuously, without jumps and strict sequence from one stage to another. For example, formation of ethno-cultural beliefs may go concurrently with perception of ethnic culture, and during ethno-cultural activities the stock of ethno-cultural knowledge can be replenished.

## Conclusion

Thus, ethno-cultural education of schoolchildren, which has acquired particular actuality at the present, ensures the formation of ethno-cultural self-identification as a necessary basis of spiritual and moral formation of personality and a condition of integration into the world culture. To do this, it's necessary to generate students' motivation to self-development on the basis of ethnic culture, to stimulate and intensify the process of ethnic identification, to promote the development of every student's identity through a focus on ethno-cultural values. The process of ethno-cultural personality formation from the perception of ethnic culture and to the involvement in active ethno-cultural activities should be given a backbone character.

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