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Ethnic Culture and Identity in the Context Of Socio-Cultural Development

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Abstract

Introduction. Ethnic culture, which is a combined collective property, is studied. The purpose of the scientific article is to conduct a review of the internal characteristics of the constituent elements of ethnoculture, to identify some ways of forming one's own national and cultural identity.

Materials and methods. Descriptive, comparative-historical methods, methods of analysis and synthesis of data, as well as general scientific principles of structuredness and systemacity were used.

Results. Each ethnic culture forms a complex social space, a kind of system of worldview, in which the political, social, economic and general cultural realities of the surrounding world are specifically refracted, and it is connected with traditions. According to the authors, traditions in the system of socio-cultural development are the memory of the historical past, the most significant figures of their people, the value of their native language, adherence to customs, rituals, folk holidays, folklore, adherence to traditional ethno-cultural ethnic norms, preference for certain types of professional activities. The importance of considering the internal characteristics of the constituent elements of ethnoculture for a deeper understanding of the ongoing processes in the multicultural environment of the region and the state is shown.

Discussion and conclusion. The cultural and psychological image of a particular people, its customs and traditions reflect social behaviour which is an effective regulator of socio-cultural development. These concepts are closely related, have an impact on the formation of ethnic culture. Historical community (nation, ethnos) is determined by the common language, the system of spiritual values that form ways of behaviour for future actions. Without any doubt, the diversity of these factors determines typical collective experiences, or features of the mental make-up of certain ethnic communities. These structural elements form an integrative concept — ethnic identity.

Keywords: culture, personality, consciousness, socialization, language, ethnos, tradition, custom, ethnic identity, ethnic status.

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Этническая культура и идентичность в контексте социокультурного развития

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Аннотация

Введение. Исследуется этническая культура, которая является совокупным коллективным достоянием. Цель научной статьи — провести обзор внутренних характеристик составных элементов этнокультуры, обозначить некоторые способы формирования собственной национальной и культурной идентичности.

Материалы и методы. При проведении исследования использовались описательный, сравнительно-исторический методы, методы анализа и синтеза данных, а также общенаучные принципы структурности и системности.

Результаты исследования. Каждая этническая культура образует сложное социальное пространство, своеобразную систему мировидения, в которой особым образом преломляются политические, социальные, экономические и общекультурные реалии окружающего мира, связана с традициями. По мнению авторов, традиции в системе социокультурного развития — это память об историческом прошлом, наиболее значительных деятелях своего народа, ценность родного языка, приверженность обычаям, ритуалам, народным праздникам, фольклору, традиционным этнокультурным этническим нормам, предпочтение определенным видам профессиональной деятельности. Показана значимость рассмотрения внутренних характеристик составных элементов этнокультуры для более глубокого понимания происходящих процессов в поликультурной среде региона и государства.

Обсуждение и заключение. Культурно-психологический облик конкретного народа, его обычаи и традиции отражают социальное поведение, являющееся эффективным регулятором социокультурного развития. Эти понятия тесным образом связаны между собой, оказывают влияние на формирование этнической культуры. Историческая общность (нация, этнос) определяется общим языком, системой духовных ценностей, формирующих способы поведения для будущих действий. Вне всякого сомнения, многообразие данных факторов определяет типические коллективные переживания, или особенности психического склада тех или иных этнических общностей. Данные структурные элементы образуют интегративное понятие — этническую идентичность.

Ключевые слова: культура, личность, сознание, социализация, язык, этнос, традиция, обычай, этническая идентичность, этнический статус.

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Introduction. Ethnic culture is characterized by the specific infrastructure, special markedness, having at the same time universal properties, which makes it possible to identify the main connections and its structure. Thus, it is possible to distinguish the elements and processes that are most essential for the development of nations and at the same time determine the nature of interethnic interaction: the language element is recognized as the main ethnic characteristic and ethnic value, as a special form of reflection of reality and specific factor of ethnic integration; the socio-normative element causes the preservation and transfer of group social experience accumulated by generations of a certain ethnic community; ethno-psychological element, reflecting the totality of views and attitudes of ethnic group representatives in the field of national communication and interethnic cultural interaction.

These elements form a kind of national culture core, concentrating norms, standards, rules of activity, a system of values developed during the historical ethnocultural development of society, ensuring “an increase in the level of ideology and consciousness, a cultural level of all members of society” [1, p. 62]. At the current stage, the development of society is determined by information processes that influence corporal and information images of a person [2], which contributes

to the radical transformation of the cultural and civilizational picture of the world. At the same time, the identification of the structural components of the ethnoculture implies the methodological justification that considering each element separately, one should take into account the close relationship between them and the mutually agreed action of the entire system as a whole.

Materials and methods. The study involved descriptive and comparative-historical methods, methods of comparison, analogy, analysis and synthesis of data. The principles of structuredness, systemacity and integrity are in demand. Particular attention is paid to the description of the importance of the correct choice of teaching methods that contribute to the awareness of students of their own national and cultural identity.

Results. Identity, as it is known, exists not just in itself, as a set of emotionally coloured representations, it has a very important regulatory behavioural component. This component can be considered as a real mechanism of not only awareness, but also the manifestation of oneself as a member of a certain group, the construction of a system of relations and actions in various ethnic-contact situations. “When we speak about identity, we must not forget that identity is not synonymous with identicalness, identity is primarily an awareness of this identicalness, in this sense it is always the result of the process of self-identification and self-exploration. We cannot but take into account the obvious social origin of individual consciousness, and the fact that in order to define or identify yourself, a person needs to correlate himself with society or its part” [3, p. 19].

Throughout life, an individual’s ethnic status tends to remain unchanged, but nevertheless ethnic identity is not static, but dynamic formation. The development and formation of ethnic identity occurs in the process of socialization, when the norms and values of the socio-cultural environment are transferred to the new generation, more and more knowledge about interethnic differences is acquired, and membership in a certain group is more clearly determined.

Ethnic identity is a multilayer phenomenon [4, 5, 6]. Data from numerous studies that clarify and concretize the age limits of the stages of ethnic identity development indicate that a number of stages go through the process of ethnic identity from diffusive to realized identity, and the result of this process is an emotional-evaluative awareness of their belonging to an ethnic group.

Discussion and conclusions. Specified components of ethnoculture primarily perform ethno-integrating and ethno-differentiating functions, acting as a kind of marker, indicator of their own and someone else’s. Therefore, a review of the internal characteristics of the components of ethnoculture provides a deeper understanding of the processes taking place in the multicultural environment of the region and the state.

Language is the most important element of culture and represents an objective form of accumulation, storage and transfer of social and historical experience. The language records knowledge formulated in certain concepts and representations. Language is a completely special source of information about culture: some types of information can be obtained by referring to the testimony of the language. Through language, the system of moral, ethical, value and ideological attitudes in society is structured, while our linguistically determined thought world not only correlates with our cultural ideals and attitudes, but even captures subconscious actions into the sphere of its influence.

Language is always a text saturated with meanings and intentions, belonging to a certain time, person, society. There are quite a few works that reveal the importance of the language factor in the development of national culture. They note that when ethnos loses its language, one of the main ethno-differentiating signs, the opportunity to perceive and continue the cultural tradition of ancestors, disappears [7]. Thus, language presupposes the integrity of ethnic community, being a kind of symbol of solidarity of people speaking in one language.

The language of the nation is a connecting thread and the key to the cultural wealth of its own and someone else’s culture. The loss of language leads to non-entry into another culture, and at the same time the path to their own customs and culture is lost. Through language contact, interaction of various national cultures is carried out, language becomes a form of intercultural exchange. The full acquisition of the target language is inextricably linked with the immersion in the world of spiritual values — the people-native speaker of this language. The important role here is given to the education system, which contributes to the solution of a wide range of moral problems generated by modern society. At the same time, the content of the educational process is important [8], taking into account the didactic and methodological aspects of the organization. Moral attitudes form attitudes toward the natural environment. This relationship is the basis ... “of fundamental properties of human nature” [9], allow us to develop our own strategy in changing living conditions [8]. The

culture of communication is important here, which affects the qualitative content of spiritual values [10], is characterized by various functions in the social system. There is a “need to consider... these functions and disposition of social structures” [11]. At the current stage of social development, “methodological problems in determining the professionalism of the teacher” arise [12], which contribute to the formation of the teacher’s pedagogical skills.

The socio-normative element of culture determines and regulates human behaviour through a group-based socially framed experience accumulated by generations of people. These are institutions of religion, law, morality, customs, traditions, rituals, folklore. They perform common social and ethnocultural functions as means of stabilizing the relations that are approved in a given society and their subsequent reproduction in the life of new generations.

Customs and traditions are an effective regulator of social behaviour, reflecting the cultural and psychological image of a particular people. These two concepts are closely related, but it should be noted that the concept of tradition is broader than the concept of custom. Customs may be called traditions, but not all traditions are customs. Tradition is an ancestral concept; custom is relating to species.

Customs are viewed as specific life situations that regulate human relationships through moral principles and actions arising from these moral principles. Formed in the process of direct collective activity, customs have a high degree of stability, although the degree of their imperativeness can change depending on ethnocultural features, the historical type of society. Customs are able to transform external influences in a certain way in order to adapt them to the specifics of culture. Therefore, customs are stable as long as they perform deterrent function, passing into the culture system only those influences from outside that are organic for it due to its historical readiness for their perception.

Cultural tradition is a group-based experience expressed in socially organized stereotypes, which is accumulated and reproduced in various human groups by space-time transmission. However, not every kind of continuity in public life can be called traditions. These include only those persistent phenomena that are transformed in the public consciousness.

Traditions include holidays, industrial practical movements, gestures, skills, rituals, because all of them are the same (since traditional) have the ability to be transmitted in subsequent stages of development in a certain way. Cultural and historical traditions largely form the value orientations of human being. Therefore, traditions are considered as a historically established conglomerate of certain ideas, unwritten rules, laws of behaviour, relationships, systems, views that covered a wide sphere from the general structure of the objective world to the rules of behaviour in the family.

The important role in the reproduction of national traditions along with ritual forms of culture belongs to religion. Religion refers to those phenomena that accompany humanity and human relations throughout the path of their existence and transformation. It is an objectively determined, historically natural element of spiritual culture of society, the content of which always corresponds to a certain state of society as a whole. The whole history of spiritual culture indicates that religion becomes not only a form of reality reflection, an expression of its state and basic characteristics, but, no less important, acts as a regulator of social activity of a person [6], his spiritual and moral education [13]. Religious worldview through its value system regulates human behaviour. Creating its picture of the world, explaining social reality in its own way, religious consciousness develops moral norms, political, ideological orientations, assumes its solution to the question of the individual’s attitude to the surrounding world. Thus, it actively regulates the behaviour of people. Without religion, without taking into account its influence on people, the development of history and social relations of any state, any people, any group, any person is impossible.

To sum up, it can be noted that sociocultural norms being an invisible guide, influencing the behaviour, thinking of people, the positions taken by people in certain situations are transmitted in the process of the person’s socialization through diachronous ethno-information. Thus, the norms of behaviour depend not only on the people themselves, but also on the established structure of society determined by the ethnocultural tradition.

The ethno-psychological element of culture reflects the attitudes of people in internal and interethnic communication and plays an important role in the processes of cultural understanding. Ethnic psychology, and more narrowly, national psychology, reflects what representatives of the whole nation have in world understanding, stable forms of behaviour, national colouring of feelings, emotions, the way of thoughts and actions, stable national traits, habits, ideas that are formed under the influence of the history of this or that people. Analysis of the literature shows that the question of the national psychology structure is one of the most complex and controversial. At the same time, scientists distinguish the following main structural components of national psychology: national character, national feelings, national identity [2, p. 19].

Currently, there are a wide variety of views not only on what is a national character, but also whether it exists at all, whether it is a more important sign than those elements of personality that unite all people in the world. In the scientific literature, there is the most common idea of the national character as a historically established set of stable psychological features of representatives of a particular ethnic group, determining the usual manner of their behaviour and the typical way of actions, manifested in their attitude to the social and everyday environment, to the world around.

The important place in a person's psychic life is occupied by national feelings, since nationality is positive and perhaps the most stable social characteristic of an individual. National feelings express primarily an emotional attitude towards the ethnic reality.

The connecting link in national psychology is national self-awareness. It has great stability and remains for a long time even if its carriers are geographically separated. The phenomenon of ethnic identity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, difficult to uniquely define or interpret.

There is an understanding of national identity as an integrative (spiritual-emotional and intellectual) concentrate of the people's spirit, which actualizes the historical memory of the people, the nation and the value of national culture in a certain historical space and time. This understanding echoes the opinion that national identity is an integrating factor that contains a moral imperative that correlates with social norms.

The results of studies of ethnic identity can be considered as a relatively stable system of reflected in consciousness objectively existing elements of ethnic reality and methods of life activity of ethnos refracted through the prism of individual experience [12, 14]. The process of forming national identity takes place in cognitive, cognitive-value, regulatory and strong-willed forms. The formed national identity is a sign without which the existence and further development of the nation as an ethno-national whole becomes impossible. There is no ethnos without self-awareness.

National identity, having independence, carries out important functions in the life of the nation: appliance (adaptation, habituation, identification), protective function, value-expressive, self-control, responsibility. Studies have highlighted the following structural elements of national identity: national self-identification, awareness of the community of language, culture, ideas about territorial community, awareness of socio-economic community, national interests, national value orientations, national and international beliefs.

A sense of national identity, awareness of language and cultural community are the system-forming factors that unite the nation. They play a great integrating role. Thanks to them, the national "Self" is constantly and daily recreated and reproduced. The sense of national identity is the key factor, this is why it needs special consideration. Identity is a phenomenon that arises from the dialectical relationship between the individual and society.

Ethnic identity is not only the awareness of one's identicalness with ethnic community, but also its assessment, the significance of membership in it, shared ethical feelings (feelings of dignity, pride, resentment, fears) are the most important criteria for interethnic comparison. These feelings are based on the deep emotional connections of a person with ethnic community and moral obligations towards it, they are formed in the process of the communication of the individual.

Ethnic identity is primarily the result of the cognitive-emotional process, the awareness of oneself by a representative of the ethnos. Historical community (nation, ethnos) carries the ability to develop an independent strong-willed unity, subjugating to a certain extent the individuals who make up it. Common language, a system of spiritual values, symbols, attitudes towards things and people are passed down from generation to generation, moreover, inherited behaviours serve as models for future actions. This variety of factors determines typical collective experiences, or features of the mental make-up of certain ethnic communities. So, ethnicity to a particular people is determined not by biological heredity, but by conscious introduction to those cultural values and holy things that form the content of the people's history. Ethnic identity is the experience of their oneness with one ethnic community and separation from others [14, pp. 44–50].

The affective component of ethnic identity, reflecting attitudes towards one's own ethnic community, is manifested in ethnic attitudes. Positive ethnic identity can be distinguished, when positive ethnic feelings and attitudes include person's satisfaction with his membership in an ethnic community, desire to belong to it, pride in the achievements of his people. Negative ethnic identity is the presence of negative attitudes to their ethnic community, which includes even the denial of their ethnic identity, feelings of humiliation, shame, preferences of other groups and peoples as reference.

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