

# **National Education as a Component of Multicultural Paradigm in the Context of Worldview Confrontations in Ukrainian Society**

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## ***Abstract***

The article deals with the need to implement the elements of national-patriotic education into a general paradigm of the modern system of higher education in Ukraine. The role of cultural dialogue and mutual understanding as a universal function of education has been discussed. The relationship between culture and education has been outlined. Much attention has been paid to the place and role of culture in shaping a student's personality in the learning process. The issue of national values in a system of global priorities has been raised. The importance of multicultural education in a multi-ethnic Ukrainian society has been emphasized. The problems of defining national identity in a fragile world have been highlighted. The results of the experimental research among students of Mykolayiv V.O.Sukhomlynsky National University in terms of multicultural expertise have been analyzed. The crucial role of the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language has been emphasized.

**Key words:** multiculturalism, national and patriotic education, cultural approach, national and general cultural values, tolerance, national identity, worldview confrontation.

In its arduous journey towards European and world community convergence Ukraine faces the serious problem of national harmonious long-term relationship. Within the framework of precarious and unstable peace the problem appears to be more complex and urgent than ever. That is especially important in the fragile world in which we live today. Dialogue and mutual understanding is a universal function of education that can to a large qualitative extent meet the challenge of transmitting of socio-cultural experience to the younger generation, thus to ensure their acquiring of universal and national values.

Providing the development of the cultural basis of a personality is the fundamental function of education, since it gives the possibility to create a reliable cultural basis of nation and its people aimed at entering the global multicultural society and approving its culture creating function.

Given the glaring evidence of xenophobia and related intolerance, the devaluation of human life and human morality flouting, we have no doubt, in spite of the decades of fruitless debate, about the implementation for multicultural education. We interpret it as a process that is based on the inextricable link between culture and education, aimed at enabling the individual to acquire a system of national and general cultural values, raising cultural awareness of the importance of tolerating cultural differences, and developing an enduring attitude towards self-realization in culture creation process. We see multiculturalism as an integral element of a person's overall culture.

The relationship between culture and education, and the analysis of educational development in the context of the humanistic paradigm have always been in the tradition of Ukrainian schools from primary level to university degree.

The multicultural education issues have been widely discussed throughout the world by scholars from different countries and continents. The historical perspective of multiculturalism is not the focus of our research, though we analyzed numerous academic sources, and as a result, we have identified the main concepts of multicultural education. They are recognized in pedagogical theories and international documents related to culture and education.

As for Ukraine, the attention of scholars (N.Avshenyuk, I.Bahov, T.Demianenko, A.Dzhurynsky, L.Golik, L.Golub, S.Kirsanova, T.Klinchenko, M.Krasovitsky, L.Sidun, O.Sukhomlynska) focused mainly on certain aspects of multicultural education. Multicultural education has never a priority in Ukraine. For the first time the subject matter fell within

scholars' area of expertise in December, 1998, when the concept of "multiculturalism" was formulated [T.Klinchenko, 1998] by the participants of the scientific conference "Problems of Multicultural Education in Ukraine", held in Kyiv. The initiative group of educators, philosophers, sociologists, cultural scientists was formed to further develop the basics of multicultural education in Ukraine, but the important decision has ultimately remained a dead letter. And eventually the inactivity of state and educational officials resulted in the artificial division of Ukrainian society into "insiders" and "outsiders", even if such a division is transmitted and spread by those involved. We believe multicultural fundamentals need to be implemented on the national level.

Educational theory and infinite anthropological data prove that the universal values of global culture are better absorbed through their unity with the national culture. This means that the national culture merging into the world culture deepens and improves it greatly. The latter, being continuously developed, contributes to the flourishing of universal culture.

Every nation is great, this fact is indisputable, and through its national traits and qualities expresses the characters of all mankind in its original way. In this regard, the purpose of education should be accented on the formation of empathic and tolerant person. Any person has to be associated with her/his national or ethnic identity, otherwise we cannot speak of humanity itself, but only of a logical abstraction, therefore it is crucial for a person to develop a sense of national dignity and love for the homeland.

The interaction between national and universal forms creates the basis of national psychology. A person who knows and respects the ethical and spiritual values of his/her own people can easily perceive and respect the cultural values of other peoples. National culture is revealed first and foremost through the spirituality of the people, which is connected with national culture and traditions, reflected in the minds of people. It is the measure tool of cultural values. Every ethnic group has its own distinctive consciousness, a mentality that depends not only on a common language, territory and economic development, but also on a common psychological structure. The religious, moral and aesthetic values of each nation manifest the intentions of people towards higher ideals; they have much in common and are transmitted from generation to generation. Going deep down to the roots nourishes and strengthens cultures, and moreover, the interaction of national cultures enriches them. Isolation from other national cultures, on the other hand, threatens extinction. The psychology of national separateness, of

ethnic exclusiveness, is a serious obstacle to understanding other cultures. Such psychology is dangerously destructive. Every nation has customs, manners and forms of behavior in which it has been brought up and to which it has become accustomed. Alien customs sometimes seem not only strange, but also unacceptable, and this is as natural as the very differences between ethnic groups and their cultures, which have been shaped by non-identical historical and natural conditions. The problem arises only when these dissimilarities are reduced to a fundamental characteristic and transformed into a hostile psychological attitude towards a certain ethnic group on the created theoretical basis aiming at creating conditions for the worldview confrontation in society between people of different ethnicities, nations and nationalities.

Ukraine is a unique European country with over 100 nationalities living on its territory. They include Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Belarusians, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Georgians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Dagestanis, Tatars, Romanians, Czechs, Kurds, Koreans and many others. And they are all represented in the education system either way. Therefore, when it comes to education, we understand that it is both national and multicultural in content and in form at the same time.

If education is to be seen as a truly cultural-creative activity (i.e. creative and formative, which preserves the ethnos and restores it), then there is a necessity in radical reconstruction of the educational processes content in most national education systems – from kindergarten and primary school to university. and organizational freedom and productivity of cultural, creative activity for both teachers and children, based on multiculturalism. Multicultural framework can take a Ukrainian national school to a higher level of development.

In 2012 we got the results of the experimental research, but they appeared to be rather disappointing. In order to examine the level of knowledge of national background we tried to find out whether students knew the basic elements of Ukrainian culture (language, traditions, national symbols, famous cultural personalities), whether they were aware of Ukrainian identity, original cultural integrity, national character and mentality. We also focused on students' attitude towards national culture as a basis for multiculturalism. The experimental results were discouraging: the Ukrainian culture was perceived by respondents as primitive (17%); students believed it had not yet reached the global level (11%); only 10% considered it as corresponding to other cultures of the world. At the same time, the feeling of superior disrespect towards other cultures were extremely rare (4% of students), which proved that it was not a characteristic of

Ukrainian mentality. The high percentage of responses demonstrating disregarding perception of Ukrainian culture illustrated that some students did not associate themselves as belonging to Ukrainian nation though they were ethnic Ukrainians that witnessed their low level of national consciousness.

When asked to define nationhood, most students mentioned common territory (43%); citizenship (48%); collective history (41%); common language (19%); shared culture (17%); and similar character (14%). Students' opinions differed as for the features which unite people inside nationality – 48% of first-year students thought it was historical background, 21% marked it as psychological identity, 14% related it with traditions, language (8%); and appearance (3%). Most students had a primitive understanding of the concept of “nation” itself. A small group of respondents identified language as an element of national culture; we realized that they recognized Russian as their “native” language like the majority of ethnic Ukrainians in the southern region of the country. Language is an essential element of national culture. The centuries-long presence of an alien culture as the dominant, the pressure on Ukrainian culture has led to the loss of the nation's identity, including its language.

Only 34% of the respondents were interested in the history of Ukrainian, 47% had occasional knowledge, and 14% had no idea about any facts of Ukrainian history. Indifference to the history of their native country indicates an extremely low level of national consciousness. The results on knowledge of national symbols were encouraging – 79% named the national anthem and banner. 21% of respondents were not able to differentiate between state and national holidays, naming mainly Independence Day, Constitution Day, Christmas, Trinity and Easter as national holidays.

We examined the level of students' national consciousness, their sense of ethnic belonging, national dignity, which are important components of national culture. We spent many hours on anonymous written surveys among students in order to identify real and truthful responses. We tried to find out if the students were hiding their nationality communicating with their group mates. It turned out that 28% of students did; 14% of respondents acted in such a way depending on the circumstances; and 57% of respondents talked about it in public. That almost half of the students' community explained it by embarrassment in marking their ethnicity (10%) and prejudice towards their ethnicity (7%). It turned out that Ukrainian students were also “ashamed” of their nationality, i.e. ethnic citizens of the Ukrainian state, whose percentage

in the department student body was the highest. In written interviews, they told of being taunted by classmates and fellow students, the city dwellers, who called them “farmers” and “villagers” because they spoke Ukrainian.

In this regard we could not ignore the question about the language students knew best. The answers revealed that 46% of those surveyed could not speak Ukrainian! Only 11% were able to speak fluent both Russian and Ukrainian. 89% admitted they used to speak Russian. The majority of students (94%) wanted to improve their knowledge in a foreign language (mostly English and German) rather than Ukrainian.

There have been many changes in the country for those 17 years. Ukraine has gone through difficult time and political turmoil, fighting for its vital need for the norms of a democratic country and its irresistible desire for social and legal standards, and values of a united Europe. Many truths have to be learned as a result of irrevocable sacrifice, lost ideals and eternal doubts. The mournful events of Maidan, the Revolution of Dignity and the situation in the eastern region of Ukraine have demonstrated the strong desire of people to be free and independent in a democratic world community.

Thus, there has been a lot of rough and tumble along the way, but there have also been positive gains. A number of state principal documents aimed at qualitative changes in the education system have been adopted. In October 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine approved a “Strategy for National-Patriotic Education of Children and Youth in 2017-2020”; in October, 2020 the plan for the implementation of the “National and Patriotic Education Strategy for 2020-2025” was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The implementation of the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring of the Ukrainian Language Functioning as the State Language” on July 16, 2019 has been considered a historic event. Two years later, on July 16, 2021 a historically crucial step to embody the norms of the Language Law led to a new era, since it contributed to strengthening its status and making its meaningful role clear as the state language in the public space, since language is a matter of state language policy within the cultural, educational and scientific spheres.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine has set up a whole range of activities aimed at national-patriotic education of young people, including seminars, nationwide events and scientific conferences.

One more thing which is of dominant importance has to be mentioned, that is the issue of national identity of Ukrainian citizens in today's environment. With each new day, through dramas and mistakes, people started realizing their role in the establishment of statehood and future realities of Ukraine on its way to global democratic community.

On June 30, 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved Ukraine's first "State Target Program for National and Patriotic Education" for the period until 2025. The aim of the program is improving and development of comprehensive statewide policy of national-patriotic education through the Ukrainian civic identity shaping and affirmation.

With this in mind we believe multicultural education will contribute to the national consciousness, the restoring and renewing of national culture and the necessity to preserve the identity of each culture on the territory of Ukraine. The state of feeling and comprehending the cultural, political history of a nation develops into an ideology of this nation as a unified and organic essence of its being.

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