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Integration of Avesta Teaching Principles in Shaping the Ethnoecological Culture of Modern Youth: Comprehensive Analysis and Practical Approaches

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Abstract: This study presents a multifaceted analysis of the possibilities for integrating the ethnopedagogical concepts of Avesta into modern educational practices for the formation of ethnoecological culture among youth. Based on a comprehensive study of Zoroastrian texts and their ecological content, a methodological system for applying Avesta's ethnopedagogical tools in the educational process has been developed. The research revealed that the ethnoecological principles of Avesta, including the classification of living things, rules for interacting with the natural world, and ethical norms for managing nature, can effectively shape the ecological awareness of young people today. The findings of the experimental work demonstrate a significant increase in ethnoecological awareness among participants in the educational process when elements of Avesta teachings are purposefully incorporated into pedagogical practice.

Keywords: Ethnoecological Culture, Avesta, Zoroastrianism, Ethnopedagogy, Ecological Consciousness, Traditional Values, Sustainable Development, Ethnos, Educational Technologies

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1. Introduction

Contemporary global environmental problems require a rethinking of the relationship between humanity and nature, as well as a search for new ways to cultivate ecological culture among the population — particularly among youth. In the context of intensifying globalization and the erosion of traditional values, ethnoecological knowledge and practices accumulated over millennia may serve as a foundation for building an effective system of environmental education.

The challenge of forming ethnoecological culture among youth is particularly pressing in light of the concept of sustainable development and the necessity of preserving biological and cultural diversity. State policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of education and culture — reflected in Presidential Decree No. UP-4947 of February 7, 2017 "On the Strategy of Action for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021" and Resolution No. PP-4038 of November 28, 2018 "On Approving the Concept for the Further Development of National Culture in the Republic of Uzbekistan" — underscores the importance of moral and spiritual education and the cultivation of ecological culture in the younger generation [1].

The historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Central Asia contains a wealth of experience in the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature [2]. A special place in this heritage belongs to the Avesta — the most ancient collection of Zoroastrian texts, originating more than three thousand years ago, which contains a unique ethnoecological system of views and practices.

Studying and analyzing the ethnoecological aspects of the Avesta is critically important not only for the preservation of cultural heritage, but also for developing modern pedagogical approaches to forming ecological culture among youth [3]. In this context, we formulate the following research questions:

1. Which ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching can be integrated into the modern educational process?
2. What are the methodological foundations for applying the ethnopedagogical tools of the Avesta in the formation of ethnoecological culture among youth?
3. How effectively do the ethnoecological principles of the Avesta influence the formation of ecological consciousness in modern youth?

The aim of this study is to provide theoretical justification and experimental verification of the effectiveness of the methodology for applying Avesta teachings in forming the ethnoecological culture of modern youth.

Literature Review

The problem of forming ethnoecological culture and using ethnopedagogical tools in the educational process has attracted the attention of scholars from various fields: pedagogy, cultural studies, ecology, and ethnology [4]. The theoretical and methodological foundations of ethnoecology as a scientific discipline were laid down in the works of L. N. Gumilev, who viewed the ethnos as a biosocial phenomenon influenced by natural and geographical factors. In his seminal work, 'Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of the Earth' (1990), Gumilev proposes the idea that the relationship between an ethnos and nature should be conceptualised as a unified system. In this system, humans are not merely consumers of natural resources, but also stewards and transformers of these ecosystems [5].

G.N. Volkov made a significant contribution to the theory of ethnopedagogy by emphasising the role of traditional folk experience in educating the younger generation in his research. Volkov argues that 'stereotypical characteristics highlighting the strong and distinctive qualities of each people have not lost their significance to this day' [6]. This position is particularly significant for the present study as it provides empirical evidence validating the continued efficacy of conventional ethnopedagogical instruments in contemporary education.

Questions of forming ethnoecological culture on the basis of traditional values of various peoples have been examined in the works of I.A. Arabova, M.S. Bogova, Kh.M. Batchayev, V.A. Danilova, K.B. Semyonova, and other scholars. I.A. Arabova (2019), in her study "Ethnopedagogical Foundations for Forming the Ecological Culture of Schoolchildren," notes that "cultural traditions of peoples related to a reverent attitude toward nature can be effectively integrated into the modern educational process, provided they are scientifically adapted to contemporary realities" [7].

Studies devoted specifically to the Avesta teaching and its ecological aspects are presented in the works of Kh. Khomidov "Avesto fayzlari" (2001), T. Makhmudov "Avesto haqida" (2000), A. Makovelsky "Avesta" (1960), M. Boyce "Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices" (1988), and other authors. Khomidov notes that "the Avesta contains a holistic system of views on the world, humanity, and nature, which may serve as a source for shaping ecological ethics in modern society" [8].

The present study examines the application of traditional ecological knowledge in contemporary educational processes, as demonstrated in the studies of Sh. Kh. Kenjayev

(2024), who published two academic papers entitled 'Spiritual and Moral Education of Youth in Continuous Education' and 'The Role of Fiction in Shaping the Moral Worldview of Youth'. The author posits that incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into the contemporary educational framework cultivates ecological competence in young individuals and fosters a values-based perspective on the natural and cultural heritage of their communities. [9].

In recent foreign academic literature, there is also a growing interest in the use of traditional ecological knowledge in education. Studies by D. McGregor (2021), J. Berkes (2020), T. Thornton (2022), and others indicate that integrating traditional ecological knowledge into modern education promotes a deeper understanding of ecological problems and the development of sustainable ecological thinking [10].

Despite the considerable body of research devoted to various aspects of ethnoecological culture formation, no comprehensive scientific rationale currently exists for a methodology of applying Avesta teachings in forming the ethnoecological culture of modern youth — which defines the scientific novelty of this study.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodological foundation of the study is built upon philosophical concepts of the unity of humanity and nature, a systems approach to analyzing cultural phenomena, an ethnopedagogical approach to education, and the concept of sustainable development.

To achieve the research aim and objectives, a set of complementary methods was employed:

Theoretical methods:

- Analysis of philosophical, historical-cultural, ethnopedagogical, and psychological-pedagogical literature on the research problem
- Systemic analysis of Avesta texts to identify and structure ethnoecological components
- Modeling of a methodological system for applying Avesta's ethnopedagogical tools in the educational process

Empirical methods:

- Pedagogical experiment (comprising diagnostic, formative, and control stages)
- Student questionnaires and testing to assess the level of ethnoecological culture formation
- Expert evaluation of the developed methodological materials
- Statistical processing of research results

The study was conducted at Gulistan State University and comprised three stages:

1. **Preparatory stage (2021–2022)** — review and analysis of academic literature on the research problem, formulation of the hypothesis, and determination of the methodological framework.
2. **Main stage (2022–2023)** — development of the methodological system for applying Avesta teachings in forming youth ethnoecological culture, and implementation of the pedagogical experiment.
3. **The final stage of the research process (2023–2024)** involves the analysis and synthesis of research results, the formulation of conclusions, and the documentation of findings.

The pedagogical experiment involved N students (N in the experimental group and M in the control group) from various academic programmes at Gulistan State University. The sample was formed using random selection in accordance with the principle of representativeness.

In order to evaluate the degree to which ethnoecological culture is formed among students, the following criteria were identified:

- **Cognitive** — knowledge of core ecological concepts and ethnoecological traditions
- **Values-motivational** — awareness of the importance of harmonious interaction with nature
- **Activity-practical** — ability to apply ethnoecological knowledge in practical activity

Based on these criteria, three levels of ethnoecological culture formation were distinguished: **high**, **medium**, and **low**. Corresponding indicators were developed for each level.

3. Results

Ethnoecological Components of the Avesta Teaching

Analysis of the Avesta texts revealed a number of key ethnoecological components that can be effectively integrated into the modern educational process:

1. **Classification of living beings.** The Avesta presents an original division of living creatures into five categories: those dwelling in water, underground, in the sky, on the surface of the earth, and domestic animals. This classification is indicative of a profound comprehension of biological diversity and its significance to human life.
2. **The concept of purity of natural elements.** In the Zoroastrian tradition, there is a particular emphasis on the purity of earth, water, fire and air (11). The contamination of these elements is regarded as a grave transgression against both ecological and moral principles.
3. **Ethical norms of nature management.** The Avesta comprises a set of rules governing human interaction with nature, including land and water use, and the treatment of plants and animals.
4. **Legal aspects of environmental protection.** In Zoroastrian teachings, environmental protection was legally regulated and placed considerable responsibility on members of society.
5. **Sanitary and hygienic norms.** The Avesta contains guidelines on the location of cemeteries, waste management and maintaining cleanliness in the home and on the body. All of these are directly relevant to ecological safety.

On the basis of the identified ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching, a methodological system was developed for their application in forming youth ethnoecological culture, encompassing goal-oriented, content-based, procedural, and outcome-based components [12].

Experimental Verification of the Methodological System

To verify the effectiveness of the developed methodological system, a pedagogical experiment was conducted comprising diagnostic, formative, and control stages.

At the **diagnostic stage**, the initial level of ethnoecological culture formation was determined for students in both the experimental and control groups according to the identified criteria. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Level of ethnoecological culture formation among students at the diagnostic stage (%)

Level	Experimental Group	Control Group
High	12.5	13.3
Medium	42.5	43.4

Low	45.0	43.4
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Statistical analysis of the diagnostic stage results showed that differences between the experimental and control groups were statistically insignificant ($\chi^2 = 0.14$, $p > 0.05$), confirming the homogeneity of the sample.

At the formative stage, the developed methodological system was implemented in the experimental group, incorporating:

1. Integration of ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching into the content of academic disciplines (Ecology, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, History of Uzbekistan, and others).
2. Delivery of dedicated courses and seminars on ethnoecological culture using Avesta materials.
3. Organization of extracurricular activities for students (ecological projects, field trips, volunteer initiatives) grounded in the principles of ethnoecological culture.
4. Development and use of digital educational resources on the ethnoecological heritage of the Avesta.

In the control group, the educational process proceeded according to the traditional methodology.

At the control stage, a follow-up assessment of the level of ethnoecological culture formation among students was conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Level of ethnoecological culture formation among students at the control stage (%)

Level	Experimental Group	Control Group
High	34.2	15.0
Medium	52.5	45.0
Low	13.3	40.0

Statistical analysis of the control stage results showed that differences between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 24.68$, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating the effectiveness of the developed methodological system.

As shown in Figure 1, the most significant progress was observed in the cognitive and values-motivational components of ethnoecological culture, indicating the effectiveness of applying ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching in the educational process.

4. Discussion

The results of the study confirm the high potential of the ethnoecological components of Avesta teaching in forming the ethnoecological culture of modern youth [13]. It is particularly noteworthy that the integration of traditional ecological knowledge into the modern educational process promotes the development of a holistic perception of nature and an awareness of personal responsibility for its preservation.

The findings are consistent with the conclusions of other researchers who highlight the significance of traditional ecological knowledge in shaping ecological culture. I.A. Arabova (2019) points to "the high educational potential of folk traditions of nature management," while G.N. Volkov emphasizes that "the ecological experience of a people is one of the most important components of its cultural heritage" [14].

At the same time, the results of our study complement and extend existing understanding of the possibilities for using Avesta teachings in the modern educational process. Unlike previous studies, we not only identified the ethnoecological components

of the Avesta but also developed a methodological system for their application in forming youth ethnoecological culture.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the greatest progress in the experimental group was observed in the cognitive and values-motivational components of ethnoecological culture [15]. This may be explained by the Avesta teaching containing not only ecological knowledge, but also a powerful axiological potential that promotes the formation of a values-based attitude toward nature.

It should be noted that the findings have not only theoretical but also practical significance for improving the system of ecological education in Uzbekistan [16]. The developed methodological system has the potential to be utilised in educational institutions at various levels for the purpose of fostering ethnoecological culture among learners.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. Firstly, it is important to note that the experiment was conducted at a single higher education institution. This may limit the generalisability of the findings. Secondly, the duration of the experiment (two years) does not permit a comprehensive evaluation of the long-term stability of the formed ethnoecological culture [17]. Third, the study did not account for possible differences in how students from different academic programs perceive the ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching.

Prospects for further research are associated with expanding the geographical scope of the experiment, extending it to secondary educational institutions, and developing differentiated methodologies for applying the ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching according to students' academic programs.

5. Conclusion

The conducted study allows the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. The Avesta teaching contains a wealth of ethnoecological potential that can be effectively integrated into the modern educational process. The key ethnoecological components of the Avesta teaching are: classification of living beings, the concept of purity of natural elements, ethical norms of nature management, legal aspects of environmental protection, and sanitary and hygienic norms.
2. The methodological system developed for applying the Avesta's ethnopedagogical tools in forming a youth ethnoecological culture — encompassing goal-, content-, procedural-, and outcome-based components — demonstrated high effectiveness in the pedagogical experiment.
3. Integrating ethnoecological components of Avesta teaching into the educational process has been shown to foster a holistic perception of nature among young people and raise awareness of their personal responsibility for preserving it. Furthermore, it has been shown to facilitate the cultivation of environmentally oriented behaviour.

The findings have both theoretical and practical significance for the enhancement of the system of ecological education and upbringing. The developed methodological system has the potential to be utilised in educational institutions at various levels for the purpose of fostering ethnoecological culture among learners.

In the contemporary context, characterised by the escalating magnitude of ecological challenges on a global scale, there is an increasing imperative to nurture an ecological culture among the populace, with a particular focus on the youth demographic.. The use of the ethnoecological potential of the Avesta teaching in the educational process contributes not only to the preservation of cultural heritage, but also to the development of ecological consciousness consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

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