
From the Researcher's Notebook

Interethnic Relations and Ethnocultural Education in Russia

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Abstract—These are results of large-scaled research project done in many regions of Russia on the conditions and factors of implementing the nationalities policy in educational activities. It investigates civic and ethnocultural components in identity formation among students. The goal of this research is also to disclose status, concerns and aspirations of the population, primarily the youth, for studying ethnic (minoritarian) languages and for practicing ethnocultural contents in education. A gap has been discovered between state educational requirements on teaching minority languages and ethnocultural necessities. So far school students are primarily oriented to study subjects needed for state certifications, existing system does not reflect varieties of interests of multiethnic populations in Russia's regions. Another discovered problem is a disparity between the objectives of civil identity formation and of keeping and studying ethnic backgrounds. By the results of this study, conclusions and recommendation are made to improve ethnocultural contents of education as part of state nationalities policy and as a condition to ensure interethnic peace and accord.

Keywords: ethnic and linguistic diversity, ethnic policy in education, ethnic (minoritarian) languages, official languages, ethnocultural education, ethnocultural needs in education, culturally responsive teaching.

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It so happens that researchers and experts have focused their attention in the sphere of education more on instrumental plots: the number of classroom hours for teaching various languages, the salaries and labor conditions of language teachers, and the availability and quality of textbooks. Even reasoning about which languages should be ranked by syllabuses as “native” and “nonnative” is also technical. Reducing the problem to a debate about educational details leads to lowered interest of the broad scientific public in the more complex problem of the goals and content of education and does not make it possible to form a scientific concept of the role of education in the country's ethnocultural development or to harmonize the general civil and regional cultural landmarks for the young generation of Russians.

In multilingual countries, the issue of languages is complicated politically and socially. Linguistic problems often become morbid, triggering acute discussions and conflicts [1]. Clearly, state support for one language, as a rule, the language of the majority, and giving it a special status (national, official) are caused

by the desire to ensure the common ground for the citizenship and to make this language an important tool of civic nation-building [2]. However, this policy is never neutral; it usually affects other languages, cultures, public opinion, and the political situation.

Russia in the post-Soviet period has witnessed more than once how linguistic problems underlay the epicenter of hot political debates and conflicts. In the first decade of new Russia, tension due to language situations and politics was especially characteristic of the Volga regions [3]. At present, the acuity of debates has substantially slackened; however, the linguistic policy of the federal and regional authorities is still contradictory and imperfect. The situation with teaching Russian and other languages at school criticized by scientists and politicians [4], as well as by public/ethnic activists [5]. Some forms of public control added to this recently: in 2013, the working group Education and Culture as Foundations of National Identity became active within the All-Russia People's Front, expertly monitoring the situation in Russia's secondary schools. In August 2016, the activists of this group conducted public examinations on the condition of ethnocultural education across the country [6]. All this is a powerful challenge for serious academic investigation.

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THE LANGUAGE ISSUES AS A POTENTIAL FIELD FOR CONFLICTS

The problem of non-exclusive and conflict-free coexistence of languages and cultures in the domain of education has not yet become a subject of thoughtful discussion in this country. The search for an optimal combination of Russian-language learning and preservation and support for linguistic diversity is still under way. Fundamentally, this is a question of implementing the constitutional rights of citizens for preservation and protection of their ethnicity and culture. Studies of the RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, the Network of Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning (EAWARN), and other research centers have shown that the linguistic sphere of public life represents a potentially conflicting field; therefore, it is better to seek solutions to the existing problems in advance.

For the recent time, in Russia there was an official line of strengthening the unification of the educational policy for all regions and nationalities. Some politicians and education practitioners on regional levels perceived this policy in its own way as demonstration of their zealous fight against cultural differences and against diversity in the education. For many of them a stance for unification meant elimination of any recognized diversity, as an exclusivist, one option approach.

The fruits of these efforts have already had ramifications: the public discourse is filled with aberrations and social phobias, which seriously hinder managerial decision-making. In recent years, discussions have sprung up in various regions of the country on discrimination and injustice in the sphere of education. Moreover, the motives are often quite similar: references to contempt of a nationality (ethnicity), religion, origin by place of residence, etc. The issues of school dress (uniform) and the outer appearance of schoolchildren and students are widely discussed. The disputes concern to what extent it is acceptable for students and associates at educational establishments to demonstrate signs of their own cultural and religious distinctiveness: whether it is possible to wear religious dress and its elements, use symbols and attributes, and exhibit culture-specific preferences in food and behavior. There are cases when citizens have appealed to the courts, made public statements, gone on hunger strikes, etc. Conflicts often take strongly emotional forms, accompanied by demonization and mudslinging in the press, negative stereotyping among students, and do not encourage tolerance in their parents.

We should admit that government bodies in the sphere of education and the leaders of educational establishments often use administrative resources to assert their stand. However, by catering to general standards and taking the upper hand over advocates of ethnocultural diversity, they really do not solve but drive inward the existing problems. To all appearances, the work that ensures uniform standards in the

content and quality of education needs updating. We should accept an innovative and more sensitive approach that it is precisely *recognized and supported by a state diversity means the very "unified educational space" and not elimination of diversity per se*. This idea largely corresponds to the Russian reality and the country's federative structure and it does not allow for illegitimate improvisations in the educational sphere.

Discrimination based on cultural differences includes also a problem of limited opportunities in education for the children of migrants and of such nationalities, as gypsies, when they refused acceptance at certain schools, when separate classes formed for them under various pretexts, when an atmosphere of intolerance prevails the educational milieu. Studies show that methodological materials that would explain to school and university teachers the norms of Russia's legislation on ethnic and religious non-discrimination have not been developed and disseminated. Administrations of educational establishments and teachers often believe that the children of newcomers have no right to education in accordance with the general procedure and refer to the federal "Law on education", which, unfortunately, does not have direct references to prevent this type of discrimination.

Another unsolved problem is adaptation of the children of newcomers to the school and daycare environments, including children whose parents came not from other countries but from other regions of Russia. With cultural distinctions, such children are not always able to adapt to new conditions, and conflicting situations may arise. Serious work is required to create universal culturally sensitive educational conditions for all categories of learners at all stages of education: in higher education institutions, elementary and secondary schools, and preschool organizations. Special methodological recommendations are required to assist adaptation for the newcomers and to train this category of students how absorb properly established cultural norms prevailed among local inhabitants. Systemic solution requires the problem of conflicting nationalistic and religious sentiments in a cause of interethnic and intercommunity communications among students. Students with diminished status or with feeling of deprivation are easy objects for radical propagandists and for all types of indoctrination. Not only young people from abroad or from another region that need cultural and social adaptation. Practically, in all regions and settlements school or higher educational institution has obliged to create friendly conditions for representatives of local cultural communities and their languages.

To overcome phobias, it is important to solve the problem of preparing educational and methodological literature to retrain teachers and tutors as specialists in cross-cultural communication. The materials used at present are superficial and outdated. This instructive materials are often obsessed with training exclusively

in cultural differences ignoring existing commonalities among students and their parents. Little attention is paid to the culture of interethnic communication, the early prevention of conflict, and the formation of civic solidarity.

Studies show that social tensions that have emerged in the country, associated with restrictions in ethnic (minoritarian) language and ethnocultural education, are not overcome but are even being exacerbated. To this end, in Russian regions, primarily in the republics, demands have been raised to restore legally “ethno-regional component of education” (this federal legal norm was abolished in 2007) [7]. However, in our opinion, there is no sense in returning to this norm, since in the 1990s the amplification of the ethno-regional component in education in some Russian republics led to significant social disagreements. This trend was fueled by theoretically narrow-minded doctrines, which usurped the title of *ethnic pedagogy*. They based on the idea of educating an ethnically oriented personality with readiness to adopt nationalistic dogmas. At the same time, the ethno-regional component of education, in the absence of another one, somehow met the needs of the population associated with the diversity of local languages and regional cultures.

At present, the notion of ethno-regional component is absent in the law on education. Instead, a contradictory legal mechanism was offered that few education practitioners choose to follow. Consider the norm, for example, according to which the language of study and upbringing is determined by the school administration itself or by the official founder of the educational establishment [8], i.e., the municipal authorities and the department of education. In this situation, it is easier for a school to obey orders from above than to show initiative and take responsibilities.

In fact, *the new mechanism of implementing ethnocultural educational needs does not work thus far*; we can even say that such a mechanism does not exist. However, the needs themselves have not disappeared in the population, and they manifested itself in many regions. According the results of our survey, at least one third of the students’ parents and of schoolchildren themselves express a desire to learn their ‘national’ (ethnic) languages. Even more respondents would like to gain knowledge about their ‘national’ (ethnic) culture, history, and traditional life-subsistence activities.

It is important to emphasize that the Strategy of state nationalities policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025, adopted in 2012, sets the objectives in this sphere, including the support and development of cultural and linguistic diversity [9]. These objectives also appear in the international obligations of the Russian state. Therefore, the question whether schools and higher educational institutions should support the ethnocultural diversity of the Russian people in their educational activities is rather rhetorical.

On May 19, 2015, V.V. Putin held a joint meeting of the Council for Interethnic Relations and the Council for the Russian Language under the Russian President. He noted that, for Russia with its ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as complex national-state structure, a balanced and effective language policy is an obvious priority. Historically, the Russian language is not just the state language of our country but also a language of interethnic communication; practically all citizens command Russian language. It was the Russian language and Russian culture that formed Russia as a multinational civilization, for centuries securing the link between generations, as well as succession and mutual enrichment of ethnic cultures. At the same time, for each ethno-nation, the preservation and development of its native language is a problem of preserving ethno-national identity, ethnocultural traditions and customs. The Russian Constitution guarantees the right of all ethno-nations to preserve their native language and to create conditions for its study and development [10].

Although the maintenance of balance in the functioning of Russian and other languages in Russia is crucially important in terms of harmonizing interethnic relations and ensuring civil unity, there is great speculation concerning “overloaded schoolchildren” and “parental reluctance” to familiarize children with local languages and cultures. At the same time, studies conducted in various years have proved that Russian schools have a firm need for ‘national’ (ethnic) languages and for the study of ethno-national cultures [11–13].

LINGUISTIC POLICY AT SCHOOL

Reproduction of ethnic languages and cultures in the sphere of education becomes difficult not only because of globalization processes but also because of banal bureaucratic procedures and the desire of the nowadays schools to “chop off everything unnecessary” and achieve stellar performances in the unified state examinations. The desire to earn prestigious ratings is strong, but the ratings ignore the opinion of the recipients of “educational services.” In case the bureaucratic system of checks and incentives is partially reoriented toward needs of the local population, ethnic languages and cultures will become much more accessible and thus preventing social tensions and conflicts.

In several Russian republics, complains (or grievances) voiced concerning the reducing classroom hours of Russian or of ethnic languages at schools, the violation of linguistic rights, the balance of Russian–non-Russian bilingualism. Thus, in 2015, a group of activists from four republics (Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Tatarstan, and Komi) issued an open letter to the country’s leadership under the slogan “Save the Russian language and interethnic accord in Russia’s national republics!” In the opinion of the applicants,

Russian-language schools in these republics adopted curricula with a reduced basic level of learning Russian without the consent of the parents. The students, contrary to their wishes and regardless of the linguistic situation in their communities, forced legislatively to study the official language of one's republic [14].

In this respect, deserves to mention that the Russian language is not only the state language of the Russian Federation but also the native language (mother tongue) for overwhelming majority of this country's citizens. Over 99% of the population consider themselves native speakers of Russian, and most students receive secondary and high education in Russian. As of the 2015/2016 academic school year, 90.5% of schools in the Russian Federation taught only in Russian; 4.4% of schools provided mixed education in Russian and other languages; and 5.1% of schools taught children in non-Russian languages [15]. Thus, 95.8% of schoolchildren are taught in Russian, 3.3% are taught in schools with mixed teaching (483 000 people); and only 1% of students go to schools with non-Russian language of instruction (132 000 people). Some Russian-language schools teach non-Russian (ethnic) languages as separate subject to 1.6 million schoolchildren. In addition, another 57 000 children study non-Russian (ethnic) languages on vocational basis or in hobby clubs at schools. Thus, overall 2.3 million out of 14 million schoolchildren study ethnic languages across Russia, i.e., 15.5%, and only one fourth of them intensively (as a language of instruction), while the rest three fourth study ethnic languages as a school subject. The latter category studies ethnic languages at elementary school or at the middle stage, while high-school curricula keep a subject of ethnic languages for only one-tenth of the schoolchildren.

We polled schoolteachers and university professors as experts in three federal districts: the Volga, The Southern (including Crimea and Sevastopol), and the North Caucasus federal districts. To discuss the possible causes and pretexts to reduce ethnocultural forms of education, the experts were asked several questions, in particular, whether schools have any barriers to teaching non-Russian (ethnic) languages. Not every schoolteacher was eager to speak out his or her opinion, and many answered ambiguously. A particularly great number of undecided answers (up to one fourth of the responding teachers) were in schools of the Volga Federal District, and there the teachers more rarely indicated the absence of barriers in teaching non-Russian (ethnic) languages; some of them pointed the Russian language as a language under a 'siege' (in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan especially). Some answered that there were no explicit barriers to learning ethnic languages; however, such languages not taught. Such nuances should be considered during monitoring in the future, otherwise sociological surveys would show an unjustifiably pastoral picture.

Especially important were the answers of a small group of teachers who thought that there were barriers to the study of ethnic languages in their schools. Such statements comprise fewer than 10% on average, but the geography is noteworthy: they are more frequent in schools of the Volga Federal District, including schools in the republics, as well as in the Southern Federal District, and rarer in Crimea and in the North Caucasus. Out of over 400 responding teachers in all cities of Crimea, only 5.3% claimed that their schools had difficulties in teaching ethnic languages, and this is one of the lowest indicators in Russia at all. The absence of barriers was stated by 87.8% of Crimean teachers; this is the highest figure in our survey. In the North Caucasus, this indicator was 82%. The situation in Adygea and Kalmykia of the Southern federal district may be considered as most favorable, the ratio of the above sociological indicators approaching the Crimean level there. Thus, the teachers in the Volga region and in Southern Russia (apart of two above mentioned republics) see the situation as in most problematic terms.

The teachers often refer to school curricula, which, in their opinion, are strongly oriented at the preparation of schoolchildren for the unified state examinations and not at mastering broad and diverse knowledge. Although one-fifth of the respondents evaded answers (refusing to assess the school administration), 40% of schoolteachers and university professors, as well as other experts, confirm that because of the state final certification (SFC) and unified state examination (USE), schools do not pay sufficient attention to the teaching of ethnic languages (except for Russian) and ethnocultural content in disciplines. Almost half of the experts believe that the necessity of preparation for examinations reduces the motivation to receive ethnocultural knowledge among both students and their parents. This opinion prevails among teachers in most regions. There are, of course, the USE proponents, especially in Crimea, but even there the opponents comprised at least one-third.

Since the system of comprehensive education in Russia is not only an institute of learning but also an institution of civil and cultural socialization, the consequences of removing or reducing ethnic languages and cultures from this system deserved more thoughtful analysis. The teachers and experts were asked whether the reduction of class hours available for the learning of ethnic languages and ethnocultural disciplines could be a cause of discontent among the population in their region? The answers revealed opposing opinions: over 40% of the experts believed that public discontent for this reason was possible, but the same number of the respondents thought that consequences would not emerge, and one fifth of them could not or did not want to assess the situation. It is important that the number of teachers who expect negative social consequences was very significant. This is an alarming symptom. What is no less significant, that kind of

teachers' concern is characteristic of all the territories under a survey, including Crimea, but it is especially manifested in the North Caucasian Federal District and the republics of the Southern Federal District.

The experts also observed which forms public discontent could take. First, they highlighted soft forms: complaints of citizens and social activists to the administration of educational establishments and the department of education, critical publications in the mass media and on the Internet. However, there is a possibility that political parties and public activists will raise this issue, and the manipulation of public opinion is also possible, especially during election campaigns. Appeals of citizens and social activists to people's deputies, governments, and executive bodies, as well as to human rights organizations, were also mentioned. Concerns that the applicants would apply to courts and that restrictions in the language education would aggravate interethnic relations were fewer.

A small number of the experts spoke of violent consequences, but those forecasts are more frequent in the republics, especially in the Southern and North Caucasian federal districts. Thus, almost one-fifth of the experts polled in Adygea and Kalmykia are sure that a decrease in ethnic languages and cultures in school curricula will deteriorate interethnic relations, and even more respondents expressed confidence that in this case political speculations and demands to change federal and regional legislations would emerge.

LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN THE VOLGA FEDERAL DISTRICT

The linguistic education in the Volga Federal District (VFD) differs from the rest of Russia, because majority of the population speaks non-Russian ethnic languages and identify them as native there [16]. While the nationwide proportion of those who command non-Russian languages is 19.4%,¹ in the VFD, it is 27.5%, and in the district's republics half of the population (50.3%) speaks other languages apart of Russian. This indicator is especially high in Chuvashia (63%) and Tatarstan (59%). If we take the district's oblasts, linguistic diversity is especially characteristic of Ulyanovsk oblast (18% of its population know other languages apart of Russian) and Orenburg oblast (15%).

Bashkir, Mari (Mountain Mari and Lowland Mari), Mordovian (Erzya and Moksha), Tatar, Udmurt, Chuvash, and Komi-Permyak are widespread among ethnic languages in the VFD. In the district 6.6 million people speak these languages (22.5% of the population), especially in the republics (48%), and a targeted policy to support these languages is pursued there, primarily those of that enjoy the official status in one's republic. The study of republican state

¹ This and similar indicators were estimated using the materials of the 2010 All-Russia census (RAS IEA database).

(official) languages at school in Tatarstan, Chuvashia, and Mari El was mandatory until most recent time.

Most of the schools in the VFD republics are Russian speaking. Instruction is done exclusively in Russian in 59% of the schools; schoolchildren are taught in Russian and in other language in 18% of the schools; and schools where the main subjects are taught in non-Russian (ethnic) languages are 23%.² About 70% of schoolchildren are instructed only in Russian;³ schools with mixed teaching educate another 18% of the schoolchildren. As for schools with non-Russian language of instruction, only 12% of schoolchildren attend them. Russian-language schools also teach ethnic languages as separate subjects or as vocational one. In total, out of 1.2 million schoolchildren in the VFD republics, about 800000 children are taught ethnic languages (5.8 million people out of all inhabitants of these republics speak ethnic languages⁴). Among the schoolchildren who study ethnic languages, less than half make an in-depth study of them, and most of the schoolchildren study ethnic languages in elementary and secondary school. The largest coverage of schoolchildren with the study of non-Russian ethnic languages is observed in Tatarstan, Chuvashia, and Mari El, and the smallest one is in Udmurtia.

In the schools of Tatarstan, ninth-graders take an examination called "unified republican test in the Tatar language," which is divided by its complexity into three categories: more complex for native speakers in schools that teach in Tatar; it is simpler for native speakers who are taught in Russian; and the simplest version is for the rest ones.

Not all the VFD republics envisage the obligatory study of the ethnic language, some republics do not have schools with instruction in the native language; those where these type of schools are formally present, instruction either exist only on paper or the number of students is rapidly decreasing. For example, Udmurtia does not have any schools at all that teach in the Udmurt language; in 2011, the Udmurt language was taught as a subject in 24 city schools to 1700 schoolchildren. In 2015, the number of such schools decreased by more than two times; only ten schools remained in the cities where the Udmurt language was taught to 1200 children, part of them study it vocationally or in hobby clubs.⁵ The number of rural schools where the Udmurt language is taught is also decreasing.

² Estimated using the data of the Unified Interdepartmental Statistical Information System (UISIS).

³ These and the following data were estimated using the materials of the UISIS, the Russian Ministry of Education and Science (form D-7 for urban and rural areas). The given open sources are not exhaustive, and final estimation requires extrapolation. Rosstat data about population age groups in the regions for 2012–2015 were used as the basis.

⁴ Estimated using the 2010 All-Russia census data.

⁵ After the statistical data of form D-7 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Udmurt Republic for the given years.

ing, which is usually explained by the aftermath of the demographic crisis: in 2013, 229 rural schools taught the Udmurt language as a subject; in 2015, 204 schools. Schools are being closed more quickly than the number of pupils is decreasing. For example, in Chuvashia, the number of children and teenagers under 14 years of age decreased by 22% in 2001–2015, while the number of schools decreased by 32%.

The above complaint letter spoke “about the sorrow and weeping of millions of Russian and Russian-speaking schoolchildren in the national republics of Russia and their parents in connection with the forced learning of national languages.” However, many opposite examples can also be cited, when people are concerned with the disappearance of schools and subsequently minority languages of Russia [17]. According to the data of the Centre for the Ethnocultural Strategy of Education, the Federal Institute of Education Development, and the federal Ministry of Education and Science, the number of schools that teach the non-Russian languages of the peoples of Russia decreased three times across the country from 2002 to 2010. This negative dynamics attributed not only the demographic situation but also the policy of ‘optimization’ of the school network, as well as the lack of trained teachers and the absence of comprehensive textbooks. It is customary to think that young people study foreign languages more eagerly than native languages. This is not quite the case. The analysis of high-school students’ language requests, done in 2014 by the Federal Institute of Education Development, revealed that some of them would like to link their careers to their native language in the future, including 15% of those who study Finno–Ugrian languages; 33% of those who study Turkic languages; 20% of those who study languages of ethnic groups in Dagestan; and 40% of those who study the Chechen and Ingush languages. Consequently, *not to allow minority languages to disappear and degrade, there should be provided educational opportunities for those who want to keep and to use these languages in their future activities* [18].

SURVEY RESULTS

The Distributed Research Centre for Interethnic and Religious Problems with the RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and the Network for Ethnological Monitoring (EAWARN) conducted a survey to identify the concerns and needs for the ethnocultural contents of education.⁶ The survey was conducted in October–November 2015 in nine regions of the VFD: the republics of Bashkortostan, Mari El, Mordovia,

⁶ This survey was conducted within the state order “Monitoring Interethnic Relations and the Religious Situation. The Analysis of Problems of Ethnocultural and Historical Education, the Analysis of the Linguistic Policy in the Regions of the Volga Federal District,” established by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science in 2015.

Udmurtia, and Chuvashia; Orenburg, Samara, and Saratov oblasts; and Perm krai. Similar surveys were conducted in all administrative regions of the North Caucasus and Southern Russia, including the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol. A sample of target groups has been divided by three categories: eighth–eleventh graders of comprehensive secondary schools; students of higher educational institutions; parents of schoolchildren of all levels of education; experts from among school teachers and professorial staff at institutions of higher education, research workers, clerks at the departments of education, and representatives of the state and municipal authorities, public and religious organizations.

Schoolchildren and their parents were polled mainly in cities, where ethnic minority languages are less widespread. To avoid bias, different schools were chosen: comprehensive schools and specializing in languages, mathematics, or engineering; and other schools. The schoolchildren were questioned separately from their parents (more specifically, the parents of other schoolchildren were questioned); members of one family did not participate the survey. Higher education institutions, their faculties and departments were also chosen with maximal variety: medical, engineering, humanities, etc. A special questionnaire has been designed for each group of respondents, but some questions in different questionnaires coincided (e.g., to compare the opinions of schoolchildren and parents). During this complex survey across Russia, 16000 respondents were questioned, 5670 of them in the Volga Federal District. No one previous scientific survey on this topic was so extensive.

The nowadays situation in the ethnocultural education. In the VFD regions, schoolchildren and students in their questionnaires pointed that they had studied in the past the following languages: Bashkir, Komi Permyak, Mari, Mordovian (Moksha, Erzya), Tatar, Udmurt, and Chuvash. Only eighth-to-eleventh graders took part in the survey; 23% of them studied ethnic languages. In the republics, this share is slightly higher, 31%; however, the situation differs by republic. It emerged that among ethnic Russian pupils who live in the VFD oblasts, only 8% study or had studied ethnic languages, and 23% of those who live in the republics. This indicator is noticeably higher among ethnic Bashkirs, Komi Permyaks, Maris, Mordovians, Tatars, Udmurts, and the Chuvash: half or more of the pupils who live in the republics study ethnic languages. This indicator of relative density is even higher for representatives of these ethnic groups who live in the oblasts, although the number of those who study ethnic languages is much less.

Forty-seven percent of schoolteachers and university professors pointed that ethnic languages are taught in their establishments.

It was important to investigate to what extent teachers and other experts support the opinion that the parents of schoolchildren and students are set against teaching ethnic minority languages and cultures. To the question whether there would be an adequate number of parents interested in teaching native languages (in addition to Russian) to their children at school in the future, 47% of experts answered in the affirmative and 29% in the negative; the rest were undecided. A similar question about school ethnocultural subjects received 51% of pro and 18% of contra answers. However, many experts did not want to or could not assess the situation. In addition, 20% of the schoolteachers and professors, as well as clerks at the departments of education, said that the school administrations of their regions were informed insufficiently about ethnocultural education needs of the population.

Most experts believe that their education institutions had no barriers against teaching ethnic languages. Only 8% said that such obstacles exist, and another 23% gave no answer this question. Specific opinions were expressed also, such as “this is a political factor,” “this is the position of the principals and of the provosts,” “teaching is there, but it is formal,” “a lack of specialists,” “this is a financial problem,” “there is no time for teaching even the main disciplines,” and “teaching is done forcibly here, and no questions about wishes.” Expert opinions differ depending on the place of questioning. The presence of obstacles was mentioned by 20% of experts in Bashkiria, 11% in Samara oblast (and if we consider the specific opinions, this indicator should be doubled); the same situation exists in Orenburg oblast, and a similar one occurs in Saratov oblast. In Udmurtia, only 9% of experts admitted the presence of obstacles, while 30% did not want to reveal their opinions.

The fact that school administrations are less oriented toward teaching ethnic languages and other ethnocultural content due to SFC and USE was confirmed by 43% of the schoolteachers and professors, and 35% disagreed (22% did not answer). Preparation for SFC and USE reduces significantly the time for teaching ethnocultural subjects. The experts note that preparation for examinations at the corresponding educational levels begins with the very start of the academic year. In these conditions, public ethnic and public cultural organizations often take the responsibilities for teaching ethnic languages, traditions, and culture, although they do not have the adequate resources and qualified specialists. Qualification is required to teach children not only languages but also local and regional history, popular visual arts, traditional handicrafts and sports. The teachers say that not all these can fit into the school schedule and that there is no need for it. It is important that the corresponding topics, as well as interdisciplinary approach, find their place in the courses taught; hence, the corresponding

requirements should be formulated for the development of state educational standards.

Thus, amid the diversity of opinions, a smaller part of experts thinks that their regions do not and will not have a social need for ethnocultural education; i.e., *most specialists confirm the presence of public interest in this sphere. However, there are doubts that educational establishments are ready to meet this interest to a proper extend.*

Social consequences of ethnocultural education. In the opinion of 76% of the experts, the study of native languages and ethnic cultures in educational establishments of their regions prevents the aggravation of interethnic tensions. This is a very significant result of the survey, since respondents who belong to different groups and not only those who are personally interested in the teaching of ethnic languages express this view. The similar number of experts said also that the study of ethnic languages and cultures could not reduce the level of the educational background of schoolchildren and couldn't limit their prospects in the national labor market. Numerous examples were cited on the successful entrance of school graduates into the country's leading institutions of higher education.

The official statistics confirms this opinion. Let us compare the results of the unified state examination for schoolchildren in the VFD republics (with many more learners of ethnic languages) with the data on the VFD oblasts (with many times fewer of those who study ethnic languages). We compare the share of school graduates who passed USE successfully by the settlements where we conducted the survey. In the republics, 97.4% of the school graduates passed mathematics successfully, and in the administrative oblasts, 96.8%. The results of the final examination in Russian language practically do not differ: 98.0% in the republics and 98.3% in the oblasts.

The common opinion supported by some schoolteachers and professors is that the schools should not deal with ethnic cultures and that this is the business of parents and of public activists. This position reflects a narrow minded approach; it does not consider the social effect of the education system. The question whether it is possible that a reduction or absence of ethnic languages and ethnocultural education become a source of public discontent in their region was answered in the affirmative by 36% of the experts and in the negative by 39%, and 25% were undecided.

A reduction in teaching ethnic languages may lead to the growth of interethnic tension in the VFD regions. About half of the experts, including 45% in the republics emphasized this. Among the possible forms of public discontent, applications of citizens to the administrations of educational establishments and the departments of education, critical publications in the mass media and Internet, and the use of this topic by political parties and movements were mentioned.

Gatherings of citizens, pickets, and meetings that are possible for this reason are mentioned by 47% of the experts; applications to people's deputies, by 69%; and to courts, by 51%. In a meantime, educational administrative bodies not always and not everywhere consider the regional specifics of the ethnocultural environment. School and university administrations often ignore the requests of the local population, thus creating social tension. In the opinion of most experts and of primarily schoolteachers and university professors, *the assessment of schoolchildren's knowledge by the results of unified state examination (USE) dealt a heavy blow to ethnocultural education and the teaching of non-Russian ethnic languages.*

IS IT A NEED TO TEACH ETHNIC LANGUAGES AND TO WHAT EXTENT?

Serious part of the VFD population is characterized by a complex ethnic identity: 15–17% of the respondents, and even more among the youth, point to a double ethnic identity. In addition, ethnic identity does not coincide with the native language attributed one's ethnic affiliation. This parameter is considered poorly while bureaucracy works out educational programs.

The survey confirmed that in some regions, especially where minority language speakers are very few, simplistic ideas prevail even among the teacher's community, like "a Russian region does not need other languages," "an ethnic language is a family problem and not a school one," etc. Some respondents doubt the necessity to develop ethnocultural education. Others think that this problem needs to be solved, but it would be enough if ethnocultural disciplines and ethnic languages (except for Russian) would be studied in hobby clubs and vacation schools. In the opinion of some experts, educational establishments that teach ethnic (minority) languages have the right to exist only when members of ethnic groups enjoy a compact pattern of settlement. However, majority of respondents favor ethnocultural education at the comprehensive schools and higher education institutions.

It is widely thought that parents want to teach their children only "practical" school disciplines that are necessary to pass examinations successfully and build a life career. However, our surveys do not confirm this. More correctly, there is practicality in judgments and intentions, but meaning of it does not always coincide with the opinion of educational officers.

Below follows the aggregated statistical breakdown of the parents' answers. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were against teaching ethnic languages at school. This figure should be somewhat increased, since some parents, especially in the oblasts with prevailing ethnic Russian population, pointed that they perceive Russian as a national language. Nineteen percent of the parents of schoolchildren favored introduc-

tory courses in ethnic languages, and 35% are for standard study; there are also adherents of in-depth study of ethnic language. Among ethnic Russian respondents, 35% were against such learning, 20% for the introductory course, and 25% for the standard learning.

Opinions differ by regions; the demand for ethnic languages is less expressed in the VFD administrative oblasts, but it is still there exist. Noteworthy, although the ethnic Russian population and the Russian language dominate in the oblasts, it is the inhabitants of major cities who were polled, and there the ethnic and linguistic mix is higher. Therefore, it is no wonder that, even in the absence of other languages except for Russian in their schools, the parents think it appropriate to teach non-Russian ethnic languages.

The opinion of parents in the VFD republics requires special attention. Those who want their children to study ethnic languages at school number 68%, and those who do not reach 32%. Among the ethnic Russian respondents in the republics, 53% favor their children studying ethnic languages (at the elementary level, 26%; at the standard level, 21%; and at the in-depth level, 6%), and 47% are against. As for the parents from among ethnic Bashkir, Maris, Mordovians, Tatars, Udmurts, and the Chuvash, at least 75% of them wish for their children to learn respective ethnic languages at school.

The parents of schoolchildren supported not only language learning but also the study of ethnocultural disciplines. They are attracted especially by local history (75%), local geography (49%), the region's ethnohistory (42%), and ethnocultural traditions/popular festivities (38%). There were also comments like "all this is an useless knowledge," but this is the opinion of only a few percent of the respondents, and more often the parents said that "we need all the above subjects, but not in-depth and without politics." Some spoke about the necessity of proportionate study of regional history and culture: "we need history without politics and the specifics of Russians, Tatars, and Bashkirs roughly in equal amounts, plus general familiarization with the Chuvash, Maris, Udmurts, Mordovians, and Kryashens." Some parents insisted that when choosing thematic directions, the opinion of the schoolchildren should be considered.

Let us turn to the opinions of the pupils. For clarity, schoolchildren and students were selected randomly, without considering their ethnic identities, as well as without school and higher school specializations. The resulted sample of the pupils was made up of 62% ethnic Russians, 10% Tatars, 6% Chuvash, and the rest represented other nationalities typical of the Volga Region. Since this region is very ethnically diversified, it is no wonder that 24% of the schoolchildren and students manifested their double ethnic identity (Tatar-Russian, Bashkir-Russian, Tatar-Bashkir, Russian-Ukrainian, etc.).

The schoolchildren and university students demonstrated strong interest in learning ethnic languages, mainly within the standard course. In the VFD republics, the desire to study ethnic languages in one way or another was expressed by 73% of learners (64% of the schoolchildren and 82% of the students). This desire was supported by 61% of the ethnic Russian respondents in the republics and opposed by 38%. As for the ethnic Bashkir, Mari, Mordovian, Tatar, Udmurt, and Chuvash schoolchildren and students, at least 80% of them expressed a desire to study respective ethnic languages.

Pupils who already study ethnic minority languages can assess from their own experience whether this study is a burden for them. Only 13% of the respondents said that they would like to give up this subject, while 86% confirmed the necessity to study ethnic languages (20% for elementary learning, 39% for standard learning, and 24% for in-depth learning): 81% of the schoolchildren (19% against), and 92% of the students (only 7% against). There are many ethnic Russians among them, 75% of whom believe it is necessary to study ethnic languages (elementary, 32%, 31% at the standard level, and 12% in-depth), and 25% would not like to do it.

Among the schoolchildren and students of the Tatar nationality, only 10% do not want to learn ethnic language (89% want to study it). Among the Chuvash, such are only 2%, and among the Bashkirs, Maris, Mordovians, and Udmurts, no one opposed the necessity to learn ethnic languages. In addition, many favor the standard, or in-depth, but not introductory learning.

Thus, *the schoolchildren and university students are positive about expanding the ethnocultural contents of education: local history (41%), folk culture (traditions and customs) (37%), ethnic cuisine (46%), and folk arts and handcrafts (29%).*

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This survey confirmed the interest of schoolchildren and students, their parents, and teachers in ethnic (minority) languages and cultures. However, how does this interest affect identity? In this respect, there are certain concerns and prejudices; in particular, it assumed that the study of ethnic cultures at school and higher educational institutions could reduce civil loyalty. However, most of the polled schoolteachers and university professors do not observe contradiction between ethnocultural education and the formation of common civil identity. Two types of identities, civic and ethnic, does not exclude but complement each other.

At the same time, the issue of interaction between ethnocultural education and identity formation is not simple. There is much speculation on that score, and there are few serious studies. We received some reli-

able data about the identity of schoolchildren and of their parents, but we should be accurate in interpreting this information. We should bear in mind that polled high school pupils were taught according to an outdated programme, consistent with the previous paradigm of the “ethno-regional component of education”. The existing programs of ethno-linguistic education are still based on the obsolete concept of the priority of ethnonational (i.e., ethnic), not civic, identity formation of learners. Gradually, educational programs and educating techniques will become more adequate, including the necessary combination of a double non-exclusive priority goal of education. That is the formation of a feeling of attachment for one’s nationality and its culture and at the same time the formation of a feeling of loyalty and belonging the own country – The Russian Federation with its rich history and culture. In the VFD republics, the schoolchildren and students who have studied ethnic languages demonstrated a good level of civic identity, 82%, although this indicator is slightly lower than the country’s average sample, as well as ethnic and regional identities expressed slightly more noticeably there.

The survey results show that concerns about the hypothetic risks of ethnocultural education are groundless in this country. Most experts expressed confidence that the study of ethnic languages and cultures does not affect negatively interethnic relations. On the contrary, using a balanced approach, it helps form civic identity among young people and respect for multi-ethnic cultural heritage and promotes socially responsible norms of behavior. In the Volga republics, those ethnic Russian schoolchildren and students who learn ethnic languages are more tolerant of migrants. The question about their attitude to possible joint education with migrants got 31% positive answers and 8% negative ones; among those who did not learn ethnic languages, the responses were 25% and 11%, respectively.

This survey and analysis has a practice-oriented meaning. In the VFD regions, it identified both achievements and weak points in ethnocultural education, as well as noticeable contradictions in requests and assessments of various categories of the population in this sphere: from deep interest in gaining knowledge about languages and cultures to proclaiming that this knowledge useless. However, it is obvious that today a part of Russian society has formed an evident request for ethnocultural knowledge, professionally delivered at school and at higher educational institutions. The experts assume that with time on, parents will be even more interested in teaching ethnic languages and ethnocultural disciplines to their children, in particular, within the school system of prevocational and vocational training. This is encouraged by new social phenomena: dissemination of recreational services, ethnographic tourism, and traditional cuisine in the regions of Russia. In the coming years, traditional crafts, ethnic woodworking techniques, furni-

ture making, folk arts, etc., will blossom, stimulating the appearance of new jobs and types of employment.

Today, we have a situation in which ethnocultural education is largely supported at school and poorly implemented in the system of professional secondary special and higher education, although all categories of pupils demonstrate a need for it. Schoolteachers and university professors say that the reduction or absence of ethnocultural education is fraught with social discontent. This can be used by political activists who claim the “violent assimilation” of ethnic groups and the “destruction” of ethnic languages. In the opinion of most experts, the presence of ethnocultural content in education does not decrease but rather increases the level of civic responsibility among schoolchildren and students, encourages personal development, and forms interest in other languages and cultures. In addition, negative ethnic stereotypes are subdued and overall interethnic tension is reduced.

At the same time, approaches to such kind of education for culturally complex society as Russia have not yet been properly developed, and a shortage of educational programs, educational specialists, and textbooks is still there. Regular monitoring of the educational needs of the population is not organized. Despite the above problems, ethnocultural education in Russia has a substantial potential for forming civil accord, and the state should use this opportunity.

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