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DIALOGUE OF CULTURES IN THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL SPACE: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL TRADITIONS OF UKRAINE AND LATVIA

Introduction

The European educational space is a dynamic environment characterized by increasing mobility of students, teachers, and researchers, as well as active intercultural interaction. In this context, the dialogue of cultures is especially important, promoting mutual understanding, enriching national identities, and forming a common European future. Ukraine and Latvia, having a shared historical past as part of the Soviet Union and modern ambitions of integration into European structures, are interesting examples for studying the features of their cultural and educational traditions and their potential for mutual exchange. The aim of these theses is to carry out a comparative analysis of the cultural and educational traditions of Ukraine and Latvia, to identify common features and differences, and to determine the prospects for their dialogue in the European educational space. Special attention will be given to the unique cultural phenomena of each country, such as Vyshyvanka Day in Ukraine and similar expressions of cultural identity in Latvia, as well as to the features of their educational systems.

Historical background of cultural and educational traditions formation

Ukraine and Latvia have a complex history that influenced the formation of their cultural and educational traditions. Both countries experienced periods of cultural and educational oppression while being part of different empires, and later – the Soviet Union. After gaining independence in 1991, a process of national cultural revival and educational reforms began [1].

In Ukraine, the education system underwent significant transformations, including the Ukrainization of the educational process, integration of Ukrainian culture into curricula, and the implementation of European education standards. Latvia also transitioned from the Soviet education system to the European model, with a strong focus on reviving the Latvian language and culture in the educational space [2].

Cultural and educational traditions of Ukraine

Ukraine has deep historical roots and a rich cultural heritage. One of the brightest examples of national identity is Vyshyvanka Day, celebrated every year on the third Thursday of May. This holiday does not have official status but is very popular among Ukrainians both in the country and abroad [3]. The vyshyvanka (embroidered shirt) is not only a traditional clothing element but also a symbol of national unity, spirituality, and generational continuity. Besides Vyshyvanka Day, other important elements of Ukrainian culture include folk holidays – Ivan Kupala, Masnytsia, Christmas. The traditions of Easter egg decoration (pysanky), rich song folklore (carols, spring songs, Kupala songs), pottery, and folk architecture (pysanky, traditional huts) are maintained. These traditions are supported in educational institutions – schools and universities regularly organize themed events, exhibitions, and concerts, helping to preserve cultural heritage. The Ukrainian education system has a strong focus on humanities and pays attention to patriotic and moral upbringing. One of its features is the active involvement of students in national traditions, ethnographic research, and project activities aimed at preserving cultural identity. For example, during Vyshyvanka Day, students organize flash mobs, photo exhibitions, and folklore readings [4]. Ukrainian universities actively cooperate with European higher education institutions, participating in Erasmus+ programs, which allows young people to learn about other cultures and represent Ukrainian culture abroad.

Cultural and educational traditions of Latvia

Latvia is a country with a distinct national identity that actively supports

traditional culture and folklore. One of the main cultural festivals is the Song and Dance Celebration (Dziesmu un deju svētki), held every five years in Riga and gathering thousands of participants from across the country. This festival is included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage [5]. During the event, people of different generations perform folk songs in national costumes, showing unity and respect for their heritage.

Another important celebration is Līgo (Jāņi) – a pagan festival of the summer solstice, during which Latvians make wreaths from oak leaves, sing folk songs, and light bonfires. It is actively celebrated in cities, villages, and educational institutions.

Latvia's educational system is closely integrated with the European educational space. Courses on intercultural communication, cultural history, and literature are widely introduced in schools and universities. Great attention is paid to learning the Latvian language as a bearer of cultural values. According to the National Education Programme, students study civic education and the cultural heritage of Latvia [6].

Student exchange programs, cultural events, and partnerships between EU universities are actively supported. Schools often hold national costume days, folk art exhibitions, and ethnographic workshops.

Common features and differences

Ukraine and Latvia share a common goal – to preserve their national identity in a globalized environment. Both countries use the educational space as a platform for promoting culture. However, while Ukraine focuses on patriotism and symbolism (for example, the vyshyvanka), Latvia emphasizes collective experience (festivals, joint singing). Both countries actively integrate into the European educational space while preserving their cultural uniqueness. Ukrainian and Latvian educational systems regard the study of national culture as an important component of patriotic education [7].

Conclusions

The cultural and educational traditions of Ukraine and Latvia have both

common features and differences, conditioned by historical, geographical, and socio-cultural factors. Both countries pay significant attention to preserving and developing national cultural heritage through the education system, seeing it as an important element of shaping national identity and patriotic upbringing of the youth.

Vyshyvanka Day in Ukraine and the Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia are vivid examples of national cultural traditions actively integrated into the educational process and contributing to preserving the cultural identity of the nations.

The dialogue of cultures in the European educational space creates unique opportunities for the mutual enrichment of cultural and educational traditions of Ukraine and Latvia. Exchange of experience, joint projects and programs, and academic research are the tools that will allow both countries not only to preserve their cultural identity but also to enrich it through interaction with other European cultures.

In today's globalized world, it is especially important to preserve cultural diversity, and education plays a key role in this process. The experience of Ukraine and Latvia demonstrates that it is possible to successfully integrate into the European educational space while maintaining one's cultural uniqueness and traditions.

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