

APPLICATION OF AVESTA TEACHINGS IN FORMING THE ETHNOECOLOGICAL CULTURE OF MODERN YOUTH

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Abstract

The article presents a theoretical study of the possibilities of integrating the ethnoecological principles of the Avesta — an ancient Zoroastrian text — into modern educational practices for the formation of the ethnoecological culture of youth. Based on a critical analysis of the ecological content of the Avesta and ethnopedagogic concepts, a theoretical model of their application in educational processes has been developed. The proposed model focuses on the classification of living beings, ethical standards of environmental management, and principles of environmental cleanliness as fundamental elements in forming ecological consciousness. Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches from ethnopedagogy, cultural studies, and environmental education, the article argues that the ethnoecological principles of the Avesta can serve as a solid foundation for promoting sustainable development and preserving cultural heritage in modern education. The theoretical implications and potential applications of this model are discussed, with emphasis on its relevance in the context of global environmental challenges and the national educational policy of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: ethnoecological culture, Avesta, Zoroastrianism, ethnopedagogy, ecological consciousness, traditional knowledge, sustainable development, educational theory, cultural heritage.

Introduction

At present, amid escalating global environmental crises, fostering ecological consciousness among youth has become a matter of primary importance. In this regard, the erosion of traditional values through globalization underscores the importance of drawing on historical and cultural knowledge to develop sustainable relationships between humanity and nature. In



Central Asia — particularly in Uzbekistan — the ancient Zoroastrian text known as the *Avesta* represents a rich source of ethnoecological principles that can be applied in modern educational practices. These principles, grounded in a holistic understanding of nature and human responsibility, align with the goals of sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation enshrined in Uzbekistan's national legislation, including Presidential Decree No. UP-4947 of February 7, 2017 "On the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021," and Presidential Resolution No. PP-4038 of November 28, 2018 "On Approval of the Concept for the Further Development of National Culture in the Republic of Uzbekistan."

The purpose of this article is to develop a theoretical model for integrating the ethnoecological concepts of the *Avesta* into educational systems in order to form the ethnoecological culture of youth. The study addresses three key questions:

1. What are the main ethnoecological components of the *Avesta* that can be integrated into modern educational frameworks?
2. What theoretical and methodological principles underlie the application of the *Avesta's* ethnopedagogic tools in education?
3. How can these principles contribute to the theoretical development of ecological consciousness and sustainable development?

By synthesizing approaches from ethnopedagogy, cultural studies, and environmental education, the study proposes a conceptual model that bridges traditional knowledge with contemporary pedagogical needs, contributing to the theoretical discourse on sustainable education.

Literature Review

Ethnoecology and Ethnopedagogy: Conceptual Foundations

Ethnoecology examines the interaction between cultural systems and ecological practices, highlighting the role of traditional knowledge in sustainable resource management. Gumilev L.N. (1990) conceptualized the ethnos as a biosocial phenomenon shaped by natural-geographical factors, advocating for a symbiotic relationship between humanity and the environment. This perspective underscores the potential of ethnoecological knowledge to inform modern environmental practices.

Ethnopedagogy focuses on integrating cultural traditions into educational processes to develop moral and intellectual qualities. Volkov G.N. (2000) argues that traditional knowledge systems retain relevance for shaping cultural identity and ethical behavior, particularly in education. Arabova I.A. (2019) emphasizes the adaptability of ethnoecological traditions to contemporary school education, highlighting their role in nurturing environmental awareness.

Ethnoecological Aspects of the *Avesta*

The *Avesta*, the foundational Zoroastrian text, offers a sophisticated ethnoecological system that integrates environmental ethics with cultural practices. Kh. Hamidov (2001) notes that the *Avesta* presents a holistic worldview emphasizing the sanctity of natural elements — earth, water, fire, and air — and prescribing ethical norms for their preservation. Boyce M. (1988) highlights the classification of living beings and the legal framework for environmental



protection within the text, reflecting a profound understanding of biodiversity and ecological balance.

Contemporary studies by D. McGregor (2021) and J. Berkes (2020) emphasize the global significance of traditional ecological knowledge in addressing modern environmental challenges. T. Thornton (2022) advocates for culturally oriented pedagogical approaches to environmental issues. These studies call for the integration of such knowledge into educational programs to cultivate sustainable thinking — an approach that aligns with the principles of environmental stewardship outlined in the Avesta.

Gaps in Existing Research

Despite growing interest in ethnoecology and ethnopedagogy, there is a lack of theoretical models that systematically integrate the ethnoecological principles of the Avesta into modern education. Existing studies largely focus on practical applications of traditional knowledge but do not offer a comprehensive theoretical model. This gap calls for the development of a rigorous conceptual approach to determine how the principles of the Avesta can inform educational theory and practice — particularly in shaping the ethnoecological culture of youth.

Theoretical Model

Core Ethnoecological Components of the Avesta

The Avesta provides a rich ethnoecological framework that can be organized into five key components:

1. **Classification of Living Beings:** The Avesta divides living organisms into five groups — those inhabiting water, underground, the sky, the earth's surface, and domestic animals — reflecting an early understanding of biodiversity and ecological interdependence.
2. **Purity of Natural Elements:** The text emphasizes the sanctity of earth, water, fire, and air, treating their pollution as both an environmental and moral violation.
3. **Ethical Standards of Environmental Management:** The Avesta prescribes guidelines for the sustainable use of land and water, and for respectful treatment of flora and fauna.
4. **Legal Framework for Environmental Protection:** Zoroastrian laws set forth in the Avesta assign societal responsibility for the conservation of natural resources, embedding environmental stewardship into social norms.
5. **Sanitary and Hygienic Practices:** The text includes rules on waste management, burial practices, and personal hygiene, linking cultural practices with environmental health.

These components form the foundation of the theoretical model for integrating the Avesta's ethnoecological principles into educational frameworks.

Methodological Principles of Integration

The following methodological principles are proposed for implementing the Avesta's ethnoecological principles in education:

- **Holistic Integration:** Incorporating Avesta concepts across multiple disciplines (ecology, cultural studies, philosophy) to promote interdisciplinary learning.
- **Value-Oriented Education:** Emphasizing the ethical and moral dimensions of environmental stewardship to cultivate a sense of responsibility in youth.



- **Contextual Adaptation:** Adapting the principles of the Avesta to modern educational contexts while preserving their cultural authenticity.
- **Active Learning:** Promoting experiential learning through projects, discussions, and cultural activities that reflect the ecological ethos of the Avesta.

The Proposed Conceptual Model

The proposed model aligns with global educational trends and comprises four components:

1. **Target Component:** Aimed at forming an ethnoecological culture by integrating Avesta principles into educational objectives consistent with sustainable development goals.
2. **Content Component:** Incorporates the ethnoecological concepts of the Avesta into curricula, focusing on biodiversity, ecological ethics, and cultural heritage.
3. **Process Component:** Employs pedagogical strategies such as interdisciplinary learning, cultural workshops, and digital resources to engage students.
4. **Outcome Component:** Targets the development of cognitive (knowledge of ecological and cultural concepts), axiological (value-based environmental awareness), and behavioral (practical application of ethnoecological principles) competencies.

Discussion

The integration of the Avesta's ethnoecological principles into educational frameworks offers several theoretical contributions. First, it bridges traditional and modern knowledge systems, enriching environmental education with culturally oriented perspectives. Second, it aligns with Uzbekistan's national policy, which prioritizes spiritual-moral upbringing and cultural preservation. Third, it responds to global calls for sustainable education, as affirmed by the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development Framework (2020).

However, implementing this model presents certain challenges. The cultural specificity of the Avesta may limit its applicability in diverse educational contexts, necessitating careful adaptation. Furthermore, integrating traditional knowledge requires teacher training and curriculum revision, which may encounter institutional resistance. Future theoretical research should focus on developing strategies for scaling this model across different educational levels and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This article proposes a theoretical model for applying the ethnoecological principles of the Avesta to the formation of an ethnoecological culture among youth. By identifying the key components of the Avesta's ecological worldview and developing a methodological model for their integration, the study contributes to the theoretical discourse on ethnopedagogy and sustainable education. The model highlights the synergy between cultural heritage and contemporary pedagogical needs, offering a pathway for fostering ecological consciousness among young people. Further research should aim to refine this model through cross-cultural comparisons and explore its applicability in diverse educational contexts.



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