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Original Research

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# The Role of Ethnopedagogy in Shaping Positive Attitudes towards Traditional Values of Kazakh People among Future Teachers in Kazakhstan

# ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to establish whether the attitudes held by master's students majoring in Education towards the traditional values of the Kazakh people change as a result of studying an elective course in Ethnopedagogy. Based on an analysis of works by Kazakh researchers, a classification of the traditional values of the Kazakh people was made. On the basis of this classification, the authors developed a questionnaire to identify attitudes towards these values. A survey was conducted among master's degree students majoring in Education at S. Toraighyrov Pavlodar State University and L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. The sample of the study was 119 people: 59 students formed the experimental group (the one where the elective course was taught), the remaining 60 were in the control group (that did not study the course). The survey was conducted twice: before the beginning and after the end of the course. The results of the first survey showed no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups. The second survey clearly showed positive changes in the attitudes towards the traditional values of the Kazakh people in the experimental group, while in the control group the results remained approximately at the level of the first survey. The authors came to the conclusion that it is necessary to strengthen the national and cultural components in the content of pedagogical education in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

**Key words:** ethnopedagogic, pedagogical education, traditional values, Kazakhstani patriotism, positive attitude.

# 1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, countries are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Intensification of international contacts has led to a significant growth in world trade, acceleration of the pace of scientific and technological progress, overcoming information inequality and has had a serious impact on virtually all spheres of life of modern society. The authorities in Kazakhstan understand the advantages of international cooperation and therefore consistently implement the policy of integration into the global community.

However, growing international contacts lead to the interpenetration of cultures, and there is one dominant culture that exerts a particularly large impact on the whole world – the Western culture. Smith (2000) notes that it is Western ideas, ideologies, values and lifestyles that are broadcast all over the world. Gibson (2007) argues that the youth is always most affected by the influence of the West. Young people have not yet fully

formed their own ideas about values, so they are vulnerable to an outside influence to a much greater extent than adults. Thus, there is a 'clash of cultures' (Triandis, 2006) in their minds, and if the influence of the native culture is not strong enough, then Western values and behaviour patterns begin to look more attractive.

Continuity of generations is ensured by the transfer of values. This process is of key importance for any nation. If each generation does not analyse the previous experience of its nation, does not perceive and develop it, then it will not have a future and will inevitably be degraded. Abdrasilkizy (2014) correctly notes that "a generation that has not preserved its past and for whom the history starts from themselves inevitably leads its state to a spiritual crisis". Unfortunately, this problem is relevant for the modern-day Kazakh nation. In the Soviet period, our traditions and customs were called "retrogressive remnants of the Middle Ages". Young people throughout the whole Union were brought up in the same way (in the spirit of communist ideals), without taking into account the different national and cultural backgrounds. This led to the fact that many people lost touch with their culture and did not even speak their native language.

After gaining independence in 1991, the Republic began a large-scale work to revive the ancestors' cultural heritage. Since then, the number of educational institutions with the state language of instruction has been growing, much attention has been paid to teaching Kazakh language and literature, and many cultural projects have been implemented. However, another external influence is now felt by people - the expansion of the Western culture. Through the mass culture (cinema, TV shows and series, music), the Internet and other modern technologies, Kazakhstan's youth is constantly faced with ideas, attitudes and behaviours that are uncharacteristic of our culture.

With that being said, it does not mean that the influence of other cultures should be perceived as hostile only. Intercultural exchange can be beneficial. Labeş (2014) argues that globalization and the preservation of cultural identity are not mutually exclusive. Two cultures can coexist in the minds of individuals. There are tools for harmonizing the native and foreign cultures, with ethnopedagogy being probably the most effective one. Burger (1971) believes that the goal of ethnopedagogy is the attainment of syncretism, or the "reconciliation of two or more cultural systems or elements with the modification of both." Researchers in Kazakhstan agree with this idea. For example, Sh. Akhmetova (2014) argues that ethnopedagogy makes it possible to develop the right attitude towards the cultural heritage, national and universal values. At the same time, the author notes that ethno-pedagogical education is especially important for future teachers, since they are the ones who are to revive, develop and strengthen cultural traditions in the course of their professional activities.

Thus, we believe that the ethno-cultural component must be integrated into the content of pedagogical education, especially a course in Ethnopedagogy the purpose of which is to familiarize students with the history and traditions of folk education. Moreover, since the foundation of ethnopedagogy is the people's wisdom and their rich cultural and historical heritage, it can be hypothesized that such a course can contribute to the development of positive attitudes towards traditional national values among future teachers.

A detailed analysis of the works by Kazakh researchers (historians, culturologists, ethnologists, sociologists and educators) made it possible to single out seven main groups of traditional values characteristic of the Kazakh ethos:

1. Family and clan. The interests of the family, the clan are always put above one's own interests. This is expressed in respect for the woman and her role of a mother and preserver of the hearth; the cult of honouring the father as head of the family and the bearer of the family name; respect for the elders; honouring the spirit of the ancestors ("Aruakh"), and respecting the mem-

ory of previous generations. In addition, such concepts as Fathers' Lands ("Ata meken" and "Ata konys") occupy a central place in the value system of Kazakhs. A Kazakh cannot exist in isolation from the family and clan.

- 2. Morality. This includes such qualities as kindness, fairness, humanity, openness, and willingness to help. According to the nomadic worldview, a person's life is a transition from the current, temporary state to the eternity ("Baki Duniye"). Everyone in this life is given a chance to become one with eternity, absoluteness. There is only one condition: to be a Human. The great Kazakh poet, educator, philosopher and thinker Abai Kunanbayev came to the conclusion that love and fairness are the beginnings of humanity. Therefore, throughout history, Kazakhs have always sought to help each other, live in harmony with their neighbours, and show friendliness and hospitality to absolutely everyone.
- 3. Striving for knowledge. Special importance has always been attached to exploring the surrounding world. Knowledge was accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation orally. Since the eighteenth century, the idea of the need for nationwide enlightenment was actively promoted. For example, Shal-Akyn Kuleke-uly was one of the first Kazakh thinkers who put forward the idea of spreading knowledge. In his opinion, education is a value and a necessary prerequisite for the intellectual, cultural, moral and spiritual development of an individual, as well as a condition for the formation and development of a mature society. Abai Kunanbayev, Ybrai Altynsarin and other outstanding enlighteners also urged their compatriots to acquire knowledge.
- 4. Harmonious coexistence with nature. The tradition of respectful and caring attitude to nature has its roots in the era of Tengrism, when there were cults of the sky, earth, water, and other elements. Since then, every Kazakh has known that it is necessary to live in harmony with the native land.
- 5. Mother tongue and culture. M. Kashgari claimed that the native language is the most important means of communication and unification of the people, an instrument of expressing the spiritual and social experience of the nation. A. Baytursynov said, "The people who have lost their language will disappear." Language is an important part of culture. It is customary to treat culture as a priceless treasure which must be carefully preserved and passed on to the next generations.
- 6. Industriousness. The children of the nomads had to become mature very early. At the age of 13-15, children were already considered adults and allowed to public meetings. They actively participated in economic and social activities. Therefore, it was important to introduce young people to trades and crafts at a young age, encourage diligence and industriousness.
- 7. Beauty and creativity. Shal-Akyn Kuleke-uly asserted that it is necessary to be able to see beauty in everything, so as not to drown in ignorance and untidiness. A special form of beauty is creativity and art. Poetry, singing and national music are of primary importance here. The Kazakh people are a singing people. Academician V. Bartold once said, "It feels like the Kazakh steppe is singing" (Toleubekova & Zhumataeva, 2007).

Cultural values can fulfil their role only if society perceives them as meaningful, important, useful and mandatory for use in everyday life. Consequently, the key question is "What is the attitude of people towards the traditional values of the Kazakh people"?

In this research, an attitude is understood as "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (Vaughan & Hogg, 2005). Although attitudes are quite stable, they may still be modified over time with exposure to training or new experiences which serve to challenge the existing beliefs. Johnson (2012) argues that certain beliefs about how teaching should be

carried out are formed at the stage of learning and then, consciously or not, transferred into one's own teaching. This means that if future teachers develop a positive attitude towards the national and cultural values while studying for their degrees, they are likely to keep it in the future when working with their students.

Thus, this study aims to answer two questions:

- 1. What attitudes are held by master's degree students majoring in Education towards traditional values of the Kazakh people?
- 2. Do the attitudes to traditional values change as a result of studying the elective course of Ethnopedagogy?

## 2. Methodology

#### 2.1 General information

This research utilizes quantitative methodology, since its purpose is to determine the presence or absence of statistically significant changes in the attitudes towards the traditional values of the Kazakh nation, rather than explain the cause or describe the nature of these changes. According to Aliaga and Gunderso (2002), the use of a quantitative methodology implies "explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)." More specifically, the present research utilized a survey-based methodology. A survey was conducted twice in the experimental and control groups: before the beginning of the Ethnopedagogy course in the experimental group and after its completion. The survey enabled statements of opinion to be directly translated into numerical data and analysed.

### 2.2 Research sample

Master's students majoring in Education at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and S. Toraighyrov Pavlodar State University were selected as the target population. The reason for choosing this particular group of respondents as the target population consists in the fact that all of them are (or will soon be) teachers. Therefore, they will be working in the education system in the coming years and in many respects it is the quality of their work that will largely determine how patriotic the new generations of young Kazakhs will be. We are convinced that a teacher cannot develop positive attitudes towards a certain object in students unless he or she has a positive attitude towards it. Therefore, patriotic students are those who are taught by patriotic teachers, and the basis of patriotism is appreciation and respectful attitude to the traditional values of the people.

The sample of the study included the experimental and control groups. All Master's students majoring in Education at the two universities were offered to study the elective course of Ethnopedagogy. The experimental group included those who chose this course. The total number of participants in the experimental group was 59. The control group was formed from those students who chose another elective course, and did not study the course of Ethnopedagogy (60 people in total). It is important to note that the Kazakh language was the language of tuition for all participants in this study. Therefore, the Ethnopedagogy course was also taught in the Kazakh language. Prior to the research, the students were explained the goals, content and procedure of the research in detail. Participation was voluntary. All participants provided written consent to participate in the research.

#### 2.3 Instruments and procedures

The research was conducted with the use of the Questionnaire for Determining Attitudes towards Traditional National and Cultural Values of Kazakhs. The questionnaire was developed by the authors of the present research based on the results of their previous research in this field and tested in the two mentioned universities. The questionnaire contained 35 statements divided into seven sections corresponding to the seven groups of values described above. Research participants were asked to rate how much they agreed

with each of the statements on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree'.

In order to encourage participants to give honest answers, the survey was anonymous. Participants were not asked to provide any personal data, the only information that was processed in this research was their answers on a 5-point scale.

The first survey was conducted in the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the semester before the commencement of the course. It was aimed to reveal the initial state of the attitudes held by research participants. Then, within one semester, the experimental group studied the course of Ethnopedagogy. Not only did the course offer the fundamentals of ethnopedagogics as a science, but also emphasized the connection of folk education with the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Kazakh people. During the course, the role of rites, traditions, national games, music and folklore in the upbringing of the younger generation was shown. The pedagogical traditions of our ancestors were considered in unity with the national and cultural peculiarities of Kazakhs as a nation. Thus, within the framework of this course, there was an integration of axiological and subject content: the values of the people were considered as the foundation of people's traditions in the field of education and upbringing.

Teaching was carried out in accordance with the basic principles of constructivism in education (Bruner, 1960). Constructivism recognizes the uniqueness of each individual as the main value assuming that throughout our lives, each of us constructs his or her own unique understanding of the world around us. The key idea of constructivism lies in the fact that knowledge cannot be transferred to the learner in a "ready-made" form. The true interiorization of knowledge is possible only when it is the learner who creates (constructs) his or her knowledge. The role of the teacher in this case is to make certain changes in the learning environment, through which the student could build such cognitive structures that the teacher wants to transfer to him or her. In constructivist understanding, learning is an active process, not a passive one. Therefore, the learning process within the framework of this course was completely student-focused: there were a lot of independent, pair and group work, discussions, projects and presentations. Conditions were created for each student to take on the role of a researcher and explore the rich world of national culture and traditions.

After the completion of the course, the second survey was conducted among the master's students of the experimental group (who studied the course) and the control group (who did not study the course) using the same questionnaire.

#### 2.4 Data analysis

The score for each answer was in the range from 1 to 5 points. Each section of the questionnaire contained 5 statements. Consequently, the sum of points in each of the seven sections could be in the range from 5 to 25 points. The final score for all 35 answers was in the range from 35 to 175 points. The higher the result, the more significant the traditional values are for the respondent.

According to the key to the Questionnaire for Determining Attitudes towards Traditional National and Cultural Values of Kazakhs, the results from 35 to 104 points indicate a low level of acceptance of these values by a person. These values are not considered as personally significant. Such a person lives in isolation from the culture of his or her own people.

The result in the range from 105 to 139 points corresponds to the average level of acceptance of the values. Such a person in general identifies himself or herself with the native culture, outwardly demonstrates respect for its values, but does not always use these values as an internal guide in everyday life. This result indicates that the values are accepted by the person rather outwardly and superficially than internally and deeply.

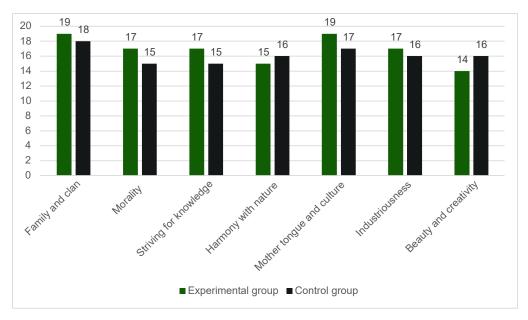
The result in the interval from 140 to 175 points shows a high level of the values acceptance. Such a person does not just respect the values of his or her people and culture – these values determine their everyday life and become an integral part of themselves.

Mean scores were calculated for the experimental and control groups in each of the seven sections, as well as mean overall scores, and percentage of participants with low, medium and high levels of acceptance of the traditional national and cultural values of the Kazakh people. All scores were rounded to the nearest whole number.

## 3. Result

### 3.1 Results of the first survey

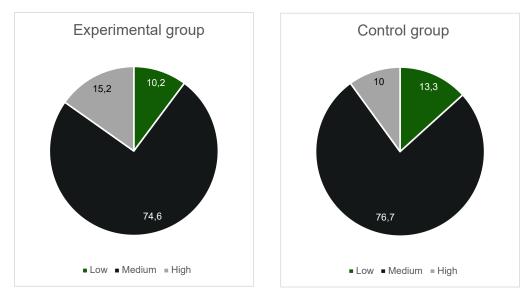
Figure 1 shows mean scores from the first survey in the experimental and control groups in each of the seven sections.





All participants' results are within the range from 14 to 19 points. In general, there are no significant differences between the results of the experimental and control groups. Students of the experimental group showed slightly better results in the sections "family and clan", "morality", "striving for knowledge", "mother tongue and culture", and "industriousness", while research participants from the control group scored slightly higher in "harmony with nature" and "beauty and creativity". It should be noted here that in all of the seven groups, the differences between the mean scores of members of the experimental and control groups did not exceed two points.

The total score for all seven sections is slightly higher in the experimental group – 118 points against 113 points in the control group. According to the methodological instructions to the Questionnaire for Determining Attitudes towards Traditional National and Cultural Values of Kazakhs, both these results correspond to the average level of values acceptance. The percentage of participants with high, medium and low levels of the traditional values acceptance in the control and experimental groups is shown in Figure 2.





As Figure 2 shows, the medium level was the most common result in both groups (74.6 points in the experimental group and 76.7 points in the control group). However, due to the fact that the experimental group had 5.2% more students with a high level and 3.1% fewer participants with a low level of the traditional values acceptance, the final result in this group is several points higher than in the control group.

## 3.2 Results of the second survey

Figure 3 shows the mean scores from the second survey conducted in the experimental and control groups after the finish of the course of Ethnopedagogy.

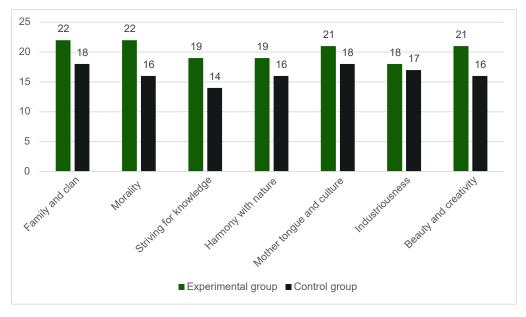


Figure 3 – Results of the second survey in the control and experimental groups (in points, the possible interval: from 5 to 25)

Speaking about the results of the second survey, three important points should be noted.

Firstly, in all seven sections of the questionnaire, the experimental group scored more points than the control one, while the results of the first survey showed an approximate equality between the groups. Secondly, compared with the results of the first survey, the results of the control group did not undergo any significant changes, which is clearly shown in Table 1.

Section of the questionnaire	Results of the first Survey	Results of the second survey
Morality	15	16
Striving for knowledge	15	14
Harmony with nature	16	16
Mother tongue and culture	17	18
Industriousness	16	17
Beauty and creativity	16	16

# Table 1 – The difference between mean scores from the first and second surveys in the control group (in points)

As can be seen from Table 1, in three of the seven sections ("family and clan", "harmony with nature", "beauty and creativity"), the results remained exactly the same. In the other four sections, there was a slight decrease or increase, but such changes did not exceed one point.

Thirdly, a significant growth was noted in the results shown by the experimental group members in all seven sections. The difference between the results of the first and the second surveys in the experimental groups is clearly shown in Table 2.

Section of the	Results of the first	Results of the second
questionnaire	Survey	survey
Family and clan	19	22
Morality	17	22
Striving for knowledge	17	19
Harmony with nature	15	19
Mother tongue and culture	19	21
Industriousness	17	18
Beauty and creativity	14	21

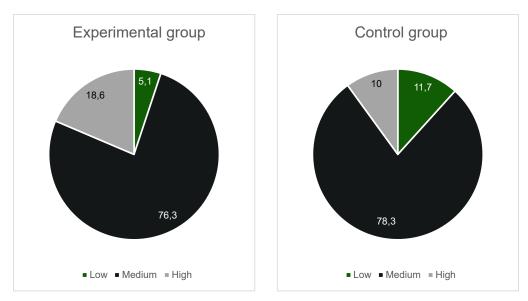
Table 2 – The difference between mean scores from the first and second surveys in the experimental group (in points)

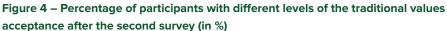
The minimum difference was observed in the section "industriousness" – the growth here amounted to 1 point only. The most significant growth was noted in the following sections: "morality" (+5 points) and "beauty and creativity" (+7 points).

The total mean score for all seven sections in the experimental group was 142 points. This value is within the interval corresponding to a high level of the traditional values acceptance (140-175 points). Compared with the results of the first survey, there was a 24-point growth.

The mean score in the control group was 115 points. Compared to the results of the first survey, it grew by only 2 points and remains in the range corresponding to the medium level of the traditional values acceptance (105-139 points).

Figure 4 shows the percentage of students with a high, medium and low level of values acceptance in the experimental and control groups.





Thus, the number of master's students with a high level of the traditional values acceptance in the experimental group was 86% higher than in the control group (18.6 % and 10 % respectively), and the share of participants with a low level of the values acceptance was more than 2 times lower (5.1 % and 11.7 % correspondingly).

In comparison with the results of the first survey, changes in the control group were minimal. The share of participants with a high level of the traditional values acceptance remained at the level of 10%. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of people with a low level – from 13.3% to 11.7%. Consequently, owing to this, there is a slight increase in the number of master's students with an average level of acceptance of the traditional values – from 76.7% to 78.3%.

Changes in the experimental group were more significant. First, the share of participants with a high level increased to 18.6% (the result of the first survey: 15.2%). Secondly, the number of master's students with a low level of the traditional values acceptance decreased twofold – from 10.2% to 5.1%. Finally, some changes were also observed in the medium group – its share increased from 74.6% to 76.3%.

# 4. Discussion

The results of the first survey showed that, even before the start of the experiment, 9 out of 10 participants demonstrated a medium or high level of the traditional values acceptance, which applies approximately equally to both the experimental group (89.8%) and the control group (86.7%). Such high results can be explained by the growth of the national consciousness among Kazakhs over the past 27 years. Since the country gained its independence in 1991, the state has implemented a number of large-scale programmes aimed at reviving the cultural heritage of the past (for example, Madeni Mura (Cultural Heritage), Rukhani Zhanghyru (Spiritual Revival), Tughan Zher (Native Land), etc.). All these programmes have contributed to popularization of the national culture, consolidation of the society and strengthening of patriotism.

In addition, the number of schools and classes with the Kazakh language of instruction is growing. In the early 1990s most of the students were taught in Russian, now the opposite is true: more than 70% of schoolchildren study in Kazakh. The number of college and university students enrolled in programmes with the Kazakh language of instruction also grows. Language is a mirror of culture and its most powerful tool. The language has accumulated

centuries-old wisdom and experience of the people. Thus, immersion into one's native language means immersion into the culture of one's native people and, therefore, their values.

Thus, the first survey showed that in general, the research participants hold positive attitudes towards the traditional values of their people. The results of the second survey were supposed to give an answer to the question whether studying a course in Ethnopedagogy could cause further improvements in these attitudes.

As mentioned earlier, one of the two sections where the most significant growth was shown was "morality" (+5 points). Such growth was made possible by the fact that the system of people's moral values constitutes the very foundation of ethnopedagogy. The goal of education and upbringing is to prepare young people for life in society, which would be impossible without introducing them to the system of moral norms in this society. Therefore, the central place in the content of the course was occupied by the problem of moral qualities development by means of folk pedagogy.

It should be noted that other researchers also emphasize the positive influence of ethnopedagogy on the development of morality in students. For example, Valiakhmetova and Salpykova (2015) proved that the course of ethnopedagogy has a beneficial effect on the development of empathy in students. Makhsudzhonova (2014) also stresses the role of ethnopedagogy in the spiritual and moral development of students and emphasizes that adherence to the principles of ethnopedagogy in teaching contributes to harmonious development of the individual.

"Beauty and creativity" was the second area in which a significant growth was noted. It is important to point out that the lowest results in the first survey were shown in this area. Modern young people may know quite a lot about contemporary Western music bands, actors and other celebrities and at the same time, not be familiar with the works of their fellow country-men. The same is true about the creative heritage of the previous generations. Ethnopedagogy, on the contrary, recognizes national art and folklore as important tools for upbringing and education. Consequently, one of the course aims was to introduce the students to the richness of the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people, with special attention to national arts, crafts and folklore. This exposure was likely to be the cause of a significant change in attitudes evidenced by the results of the second survey.

Getting familiar with folk art contributes to the development of a sense of beauty in students. Therefore, creativity plays an important role in the upbringing and spiritual development of students. Utesheva and Yerkibayeva (2014) came to a similar conclusion in their study.

An important role in the achievement of this result was played by applying the constructivist approach to teaching this course. Due to this, Master's students were actively involved in all types of learning activities. They participated in the search for new information, made presentations, held discussions, and formulated their own conclusions. Such independence allowed each of them to construct their own vision and understanding of the traditional values of Kazakhs. New knowledge was not presented to them in a ready-made form, it had to be built through independent research, personal experience, and exchange of opinions with groupmates. Therefore, it is not surprising that such knowledge was perceived as important and meaningful for them personally, which is clearly evidenced by the results of the second survey.

Thus, the second survey clearly showed that the course of Ethnopedagogy contributed to the formation of a more positive attitude to the traditional values of the people. Significant changes were observed in the experimental group regarding all seven areas under consideration. In each section, the results shown by the experimental group were higher than those demonstrated by the control group, sometimes by quite a wide margin.

## 5. Conclusion

Answering the first of the questions formulated in the introduction, it can be stated that the attitudes of master's degree students majoring in Education to the traditional values of their people were in general positive. Despite some gaps in knowledge (for example, in the field of the national art and folklore), one can argue that traditional values play an important role in the lives of these people.

Answering the second question, one can safely say that the course of Ethnopedagogy caused a change in attitudes towards these values among the research participants. Having been shown the history of folk pedagogical thought and its inseparable connection with the culture, traditions and customs of the people, the master's students were challenged to rethink the importance of their people's traditional values in their own lives.

Preserving one's cultural identity in the era of globalization has become a topical issue for many nations around the globe. A solid foundation of spirituality was laid by Kazakhs in the past, and it forms an axiological basis for the nation's subsequent development. It is therefore evident that the traditional values accumulated over the long history of the nation's development can ensure the survival and strengthening of Kazakhs' national identity.

It is thus important to develop a respectful attitude to the traditional values of Kazakhs, first of all, among teachers. Only then they will be able to help their students build the same attitudes. Therefore, an extensive national and cultural component should be integrated into the content of pedagogical education. There should be not one, but several mutually reinforcing courses.

Speaking about the prospects for further research in this area, it should be noted that there is a need to develop and implement courses of a new type at both pre-service and in-service levels of teacher training. In such courses, current issues of teaching staff training should be systematically integrated with issues of instilling patriotism, love for the Motherland and respect for the culture and traditions of one's people. A strong and bright future can be built only by bridging the present with the past.

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